



37
LAWS

OF HAPPINESS & JOY

Section 1: A Brief Introduction to Happiness and Joy

By Ike E. Zion

...be unapologetic for taking back your life.

Seize your freedom!

37 Laws of Happiness & Joy

Section 1

A Brief Introduction to Happiness and Joy

Happiness is not the absence of sadness. To erase sadness would be to erase a part of what makes us human. No, true happiness is a continuum; it is about creating a steady baseline of peace, so much so that when life inevitably throws challenges our way, we have the propensity to quickly return to that baseline.

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ISBN: 9798267288910

Imprint: Independently published

Cover design by: Aiel Cosmopolitan Ltd

Edited by: Aiel Cosmopolitan Ltd

Printed in the United States of America

Disclaimer

This book is based on the author's personal experiences, reflections, and perspectives. It is intended for inspiration and encouragement only.

The contents of this book do not constitute medical, psychological, or professional advice. Readers should not use the material in this book as a substitute for qualified care. If you are experiencing emotional distress, depression, or thoughts of self-harm, please seek support from a licensed professional, counselor, or trusted resource in your community.

Every effort has been made to provide accurate and sincere insights. However, each reader's journey is unique, and the author makes no guarantees about the outcomes of applying the ideas shared in this book.

By reading this book, you acknowledge that you are responsible for your own well-being, choices, and actions

While this book draws from the author's life experiences and perspectives, many of the stories, characters, and illustrations have been adapted, fictionalized, or combined for illustration and to encourage. They should not be read as exact accounts of real individuals or events.

Quotations from historical figures, authors, and other sources are provided for illustrative purposes only. Every effort has been made to attribute all quotations not belonging to Ike E. Zion accurately. If any errors in attribution remain, they are entirely unintentional.

Content Note

This book contains honest reflections on illness, grief, and emotional hardship. Some passages may feel intense. Please care for your well-being as you read, and if you are struggling, reach out to a trusted friend, counselor, or professional resource. You are not alone.

From the Back Cover

Author, storyteller, and seeker of timeless wisdom.

Ike E. Zion has stood at the edge of despair. Yet out of it came a new understanding of joy, not a temporary feeling, but a steady anchor that has the capacity to help us to return to peace again and again.

In 37 Laws of Happiness & Joy, he shares hard-earned wisdom that has been drawn from struggle, reflection, and renewal. These “laws” are timeless guideposts: principles of resilience, gratitude, simplicity, courage, and hope.

This book has been structured through candid storytelling and practical insights, and it calls on you to confront limiting beliefs, strengthen your spirit, and create your own joy in everyday life.

If you are searching for encouragement, clarity, and the courage to begin again, this book is for you.

Be unapologetic for taking back your life. Seize your freedom!

Dedication

This book is devoted to every one of you who believes in your own power to continue to strive to be in control of your own lives. Your persistence and your gutsy spirit are the very things that encourage us all to traverse this path of happiness.

To those who are stuck in the depths of darkness, I am calling out to you: ***“Come Out! Come Out! Come Out!”*** May this book be a guiding light to you, and may it illuminate the route to happiness, emancipation, and a life that is full of limitless possibilities.

Acknowledgement

I want to appreciate the following people for their tremendous help, advice, and inspiration in my life and in the process of writing this book: “37 Laws of Happiness & Joy.”

I want to start by expressing my gratitude to my wife and kids, who are the best gifts I have ever received in this life. Your love and support have been my driving force throughout this journey. I love each and every one of you.

I am indebted to my father, Rt. Rev. Remigius Enyonnaya Ugwuanya. Despite the challenges that we faced as a family, you stood tall and cared for us, your five children. Moreover, your emphasis on good moral principles and the way that you nurtured my passion for books and writing from an early age have shaped my character and aspirations.

To my Mum, Goodluck Ugwuanya (may her soul rest in peace). You are forever alive. I love you so very much.

To my siblings, thank you for being such a great family: Naomi, Kaiser, Judah, and God's Will.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Mishael Ogbonna, my brother and close friend. My story would never be complete without mentioning you. For me, your friendship has been invaluable.

I am thankful to JFK Abiona. Your inspiring mentorship and assistance when I relocated to Abuja opened my eyes to a world of possibilities.

Thank you, Pastor Linus and Mummy Grace Enyeribe Agunna, for your constant support, encouragement, and counseling in difficult times. Your presence in my life has been both comforting and inspiring.

I would also like to thank Dr. Obiazu, the nurse, and the professor at Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital from 1998 to 1999. Your knowledge, caring, and determination to save my life are forever greatly appreciated.

I want to express a heartfelt gratitude to Patricia Omoqui from the United States. Meeting you was a turning point in my life. Your books and writings had a significant positive impact on me.

Writing this book required 7 years of substantial research, and I am really grateful for the numerous resources available on the internet. The abundance of expertise and information I discovered proved critical in completing this book.

Thank you to my friends and extended family members for your continuous support, encouragement, and belief in me. Your presence in my life has had a huge impact, and I am deeply grateful for your love.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who loved and helped me during my most difficult times. It was you who gave me the strength to overcome my shortcomings and find inner power when my own strength failed.

And then to those who caused me grief or turned away in my darkest moments, I am grateful for the lessons. You taught me about self-sufficiency and resilience.

To all those not listed, I'm thankful to you also. Your efforts, large or small, cannot be forgotten. I appreciate your participation in my journey as an author.

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, THANK YOU ALL.

May this book serve as a beacon of light; may it inspire readers to find their own paths to long-term happiness, joy, and fulfillment.

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PREFACE

A Journey from Despair to Happiness

This book is not written by a doctor, a therapist, or a scholar. It is written by a man who has lived, struggled, broken, and rebuilt. Twice in my life, I reached the edge of despair and nearly gave up on living. But I survived. And in surviving, I began to discover truths that I now call the *37 Laws of Happiness & Joy*.

These laws are not formulas or clinical prescriptions. They are the hard-earned lessons I gathered on my own journey through darkness into light. I share them here not as shortcuts, but as testimony. I know what it means to feel alone while sorrow prowls in the mind like a restless demon. I know the storm clouds that whisper hopelessness. And I also know the courage it takes to rise again.

If you are reading this, know that you are not alone. Take my story, and I hope that it may serve as a companion for you, a reminder that happiness is not the absence of sadness but the resilience to return to peace again and again. These *37 Laws* are simply the wisdom I gleaned along the way: pearls gathered from pain, reflection, and renewal.

How it all started

Frankly, it was when I decided to seize control of my own life, when I became tired of being a victim, that I started to investigate the laws that governed Happiness and joy. This was when I started to learn; this was when I started to ask existential questions: “What was it going to take for me to become and keep being the best version of myself every day?” Now, I understand happiness because I have known unhappiness intimately. Let me show you what I mean.

My story began in 1998 when unfortunate circumstances decided to start tearing my family apart. My family had overcome many hardships before, such as the 1991 Kano riot, which forced us to leave the North and move back to the East, but because my parents met our basic needs, my siblings and I were shielded from those struggles as young children.

All that changed in 1998, when I was diagnosed with an ailment that the doctors called osteoporosis and osteomyelitis. Frankly, I don’t even know what that means; never heard of those words before. Of course, I’m not a health practitioner, but I thought to myself, “It had to be really bad” because I was in a lot of pain. The doctors explained to my parents that osteoporosis is a crippling disorder that weakens the bones and causes chronic pain and fractures. At the same time, osteomyelitis is a chronic infection of the bones. I didn’t understand those medical terminologies; I still don’t, but I just wanted to get better. We traveled from one hospital to another; my parents were like desperate seekers in a labyrinth of ambiguity, because Nigerian hospitals at the time lacked the sophisticated diagnostic apparatus required for a precise diagnosis. I was subjected to innumerable needlesticks and medical tests; it was not funny at all, because I was like a guinea pig for research and experiments.

After being misdiagnosed in other hospitals and wrongly treated for many things, according to what the doctors later revealed, the correct diagnosis was finally made at Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital (now a teaching hospital). By then, there were several other complications; my body had deteriorated to an extremely pitiful state, and there was very little left of me to recognize. My mom cried every time she looked at me. Every time I looked at her, heavy guilt pressed upon me, as I was very much aware that my condition was causing so much pressure, pain, and financial strain for my family. I wanted nothing more than for it to stop. I thought about my siblings left alone at home and how they were starved of care and need because my parents spent their entire time overwhelmed and losing themselves, sacrificing their own well-being to save my life. Sometimes I would see my father and mother get into an argument, and my father would angrily leave, sometimes without saying goodbye. He was trying his best; my mom was trying her best; I could see the stress. They were both losing weight, and these things added to my misery.

The suffering that I went through was not only physical; it was a never-ending agony. More times than I can remember, it was always as if my bones and psyche were being pounded by a million sledgehammers. It was that level of pain where you no longer have the strength to even scream. I couldn't sleep, and the only expression I had was silent crying and gnashing of teeth; my mother, too, cried all the time. There were severe complications in my leg, and even social discomfort that would be too graphic to describe here. My leg was swollen, and a similar thing happened to my jaw, which made it difficult for me to chew or eat anything other than fluids. It was physically impossible for me to move around, and every touch was so painful that I needed to be held and carried very carefully.

When I arrived at Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital, the physicians had just gone on a national strike. It was as if I were the unluckiest human on earth, and fate was always working against me. We saw people returning home with their ailing loved ones, with all their hopes dashed; the atmosphere that we met that day was saturated with desperation.

The humiliation and suffering that we went through made matters even worse. I can still remember the way that one callous, heartless nurse yelled at my mother. Nevertheless, my parents did not give up, because the reality was that this hospital was our only hope, my lifeline, and without a miracle, returning home would only result in my death. I guess I still had a purpose to fulfill here on earth, because then, when everything was looking bleak, a passing student nurse saw my predicament, and a miracle did really come to my aid. She persuaded Doctor Obiazu, a colleague of hers, to admit me as a private patient until the end of the strike.

They also contacted a professor who was a bone specialist, and after confirming the diagnosis, I was rushed into surgery. Just a few days after the surgery, my left thigh collapsed and fractured; my knee was severely dislodged, and I couldn't chew anything because of my jaw, so the doctors told my parents that it was a necessity to return to the operating theater, my parents were told to sign some documents and make some payments and I was taken back for a second surgery. From there, I lived through the next year that came encased in a heavy and lengthy plaster cast from my Achilles to my belly. I ate, relieved myself, and was cleaned while lying down. I couldn't sit or touch the ground. For nearly three years, starting from the time of diagnosis to recovery, I completely lost the use of my legs, and I had to learn to walk again, like a newborn child, aided by crutches.

If that were the end of my tribulations, it would have been enough; I might have even considered it fair. But no, it was not. On the 13th of July 2000, seven days before my birthday, my mom died. This woman, who had sacrificed more than two years of her life by my side, supporting me, cried when I cried, and shared in all my agony, day and night. She was taken from me just as a glimmer of hope appeared, just when we thought there was finally light at the end of the tunnel. All the promises that I made to her, things that I said I would do when I became a man, she didn't even stay; she never had the chance to see me triumph against all odds. She was cruelly taken from me by death.

Her departure plunged me into a psychological abyss from which I just couldn't escape. The pain was unfathomable, and I succumbed to the darkness. For the past two years, I had known pain, pain that the doctors fought with analgesics and other medicines, pain I could even cry away. But this time, this particular pain, no one could help me; not medicine, not tears, not comfort; nothing could save me, nothing could bring her back, and I gave in to self-pity. The world! The entire world became my enemy.

There was more hardship coming. My father lost his job at Snok Guest House, Aluminum Doors and Windows, and was unable to find another, so we were left motherless, poor, vulnerable, and alone. Despite all this, my father became a rock; he continued to provide us with food, clothing, and shelter; the kind of fortitude that he showed during those difficult times was nothing short of heroism. My younger sibling, who was born prior to my mother's death, was placed in a motherless babies' home, and we went there to visit him regularly.

There was a dark shadow of remorse, so crushing that it weighed me down like a leaden cloak for years. I was completely certain that I was the cause of my family's disintegration. It was a continual, excruciating torture every time that it came to my thought that my ailment had somehow taken away my mother, left my siblings motherless, and brought us to financial ruin. I'd mutter to myself when I was alone, *"If only I hadn't fallen sick,"* and these words would just dangerously echo into the shadowy depths of my heart. No matter how I tried, I just couldn't get out of the bleak wasteland of *"what ifs"* and *"should haves."* I blamed myself for every issue, every adversity, and every tear. I felt hopelessly lost in a bottomless pit that represented the depth of my despair.

I was emotionally and mentally damaged at a very young age. These bad experiences threw a pall over my social and personal life, which caused a series of setbacks and hopelessness. After finishing secondary school, I left my father's house; by then, there was a serious decline in our relationship for reasons I can't discuss in this book. No member of my family was aware of my location or general well-being for years as I sailed into obscurity, into suffering, failure, and growing melancholy. My failure to keep romantic connections or friendships added to this suffering, and loneliness became my daily companion. I became self-absorbed, like a bag of Pampers holding all that flood of resentment and self-pity.

At one point, I was employed as a storekeeper in a construction firm called Sageto. This opportunity came through the intervention of a caring sister who learned of the troubles between my father and me. I rented a room in a village near Asokoro, where I had a neighbor who, in his own way, became a lifeline. He was a local musician skilled in playing the guitar, and since I, too, had a passion for

music, we would occasionally spend time together making music and sharing moments of respite. He even taught me how to play the guitar.

One evening, after returning home from work, I was suddenly engulfed by a tidal wave of depression: a despair so intense that it nearly convinced me there was no point in continuing. In that moment, I was ready to surrender to the weight of sorrow. But as has often been the case in my life, a timely interruption came, and reminded me that there was still purpose to be found and life yet to be lived. I heard a knock on my door; it was my neighbor. He walked right in and started talking to me. He talked about the problems he was having with his girlfriend and asked me for advice. This is something I was already used to; people always came to me for advice, even when I myself was sinking. Afterward, we drank whiskey and vodka, smoked cigarettes, and played some music. Later, after he left, I was so exhausted and inebriated that I dozed off. When I woke up, I no longer had the urge to end my tenure here on earth. Being religious, I asked God, ***“What the hell do you want from me?”*** as I broke down in tears. ***“You won’t let me live, and you won’t let me die. What the hell do you want from me?”***

There were moments when my life hung by a thread. There was even a time, after meeting with my mentor Patricia Omoqui, that I sent her a message along with some of my writings. I told her, “If anything ever happens to me, please help publish these.” That is how clouded my vision of the future had become: I saw only despair, no hope, no respite. But I tell you this, still even in that darkness, seeds of my story were already being planted, only awaiting their season to blossom into light.

Throughout my journey, I have experienced homelessness; I’ve sought shelter under bridges and in motor parks. I hawked bread and beverages in traffic, cooked fast food in motor parks, worked as a barber in open street salons, and took on various jobs despite the toll they took on my fragile health and fragile bones. I toiled as a laborer, bricklayer, mason, welder, and steel bender until my deteriorating health forced me to abandon the construction industry.

In the early years of starting my first company, Aiel Cosmopolitan Ltd., I suffered large financial losses in a number of commercial endeavors, including production, logistics, and import and export. In addition, my marriage nearly collapsed in its early stages.

Without any doubt, my life has been a furnace of adversity. I would not, however, exchange these experiences for all the gold in the world, especially when I look back now on how far I’ve come and who I have become. It is their beauty that has inspired me to write this book, and they have helped me to become the person that I am today. I want to use my scars to light a way for people who are at the bottom of their despair, to show them that even if you just have one day left to live, you can live your life so that the world not only recognizes you but is thankful for you.

In life, it is tempting to assign blame to circumstances, events, and other people for our misfortunes. Blaming others is the easy way out. It is a huge challenge for people to comprehend and accept the fact that we are solely responsible for our own lives, 100%. Even when some bad things may not be our fault, blaming others for how our lives turn out is self-sabotage, and self-sabotage is an evil that we should avoid at all times.

Our sorrows will only be prolonged if we choose to dwell in self-pity, resentment, or guilt. We have to take whatever action is appropriate, learn from the experience, climb out of the ruins, rescue what's left, and set out on a new adventure. It is entirely our responsibility to fulfill this obligation. It is also possible for us to unlearn any bad behaviors we may have picked up from our early years or from other circumstances. Understand this: it is essential to approach life with clarity, integrity, and sincerity, and to understand that our decisions and deeds determine our level of fulfillment and happiness.

This book, “37 Laws of Happiness & Joy,” is my ode to the human spirit's tenacity and the transformational potential of our individual accountability. It is a guide to the wealth of Happiness & joy that is just waiting to be found and nurtured in each of us. I ask that you open your heart and mind as you read the pages that follow and get prepared for personal development. I hope that these principles of happiness help you find your way and guide you toward a happy and fulfilling way of living.

Note:

It is my honest wish not to waste anybody's time. This book is not for you if you believe that it is the responsibility of other people to improve your own life. This “37 Laws of Happiness & Joy” is a manual that guides people to take charge of their own happiness and learn the skills and ideas that are required to design a satisfying life. These pages contain a wealth of timeless knowledge and useful ideas that you may use in your day-to-day life to help you deal with obstacles, failures, and uncertainties.

You may learn from these 37 Laws that happiness & joy are not a destination; it is a continuous journey, and this journey requires intentional actions and a continuous change in our perspectives. If you allow it, every rule you read here objectively can be a valuable lesson; a pearl of wisdom gained from years of research, observation, and personal experience.

This book is not a one-size-fits-all guide to Happiness & joy or a quick-fix solution. Each Act written here addresses different areas of life. You may find different ideas and advice useful for different situations to enable you to discover your own route to fulfillment and to help you design a life that is consistent with your values, passions, and goals, which may then motivate you to confront limiting ideas, break the chains of bad habits, and develop healthy routines that support your well-being.

Are you prepared to go on this life-changing adventure and discover the keys to living an effective and fulfilling life? If so, *let's investigate the “37 Laws of Happiness & Joy.”*

*My own experiences served as the inspiration for the laws in this book; they are a documentation of the insights that led me along the path of light from the depths of darkness.
Read objectively.*

The complete book is divided into six sections.

This edition contains Section 1: A Brief Introduction to Happiness and Joy.

The remaining sections are:

Section 2: Building Positive Relationships.

Section 3: Inner Strength, Personal Development, and Growth —
Part I.

Section 4: Well-Being and Self-Care.

Section 5: Inner Strength, Personal Development, and Growth —
Part II.

Section 6: At Rock Bottom: When You Have Seen It All and the
Only Way Left Is Up.

The full book is available as a complete volume, or you may
choose to obtain the individual sections separately.

Section 1

A Brief Introduction to Happiness and Joy

1st Act

The Law of Gratitude, Contentment, and Appreciation

Quote

Every day you wake up is your birthday. Celebrate yourself.

Narrative of Admonition

You've probably heard the phrase, "Midas Touch." Let me tell you a story about it.

There was a King so powerful and affluent who reigned over the dominion of Phrygia many centuries past; his name was Midas. Everyone, far and wide, knew about his enormous wealth and extravagant lifestyle. He was, without question, exceedingly wealthy. Yet, notwithstanding this vast treasury, King Midas remained perpetually unhappy. He believed that an ever-augmenting abundance of gold would indeed procure the felicity that he so ardently coveted, so he kept on searching for more and more riches.

One day, having discerned his insatiable avarice for opulence, the gods of the land decided to teach the King a lesson. A particular god, the god of wine and celebration, Dionysus, appeared before the monarch and promised to fulfill any one of his wishes. King Midas was so consumed by his rapacity that he wished that everything he touched would turn to gold.

When this very wish came true, one can scarcely fathom the astonishment that seized him. Every day, Omoruyi looked at ordinary objects metamorphose into glittering gold just by touching them; excitement flooded his veins, and he went on a touching binge. With its abundance of golden ornaments and sculptures, his palace was transfigured into a veritable treasury of dazzling splendor. Now, he could finally be content, or so he thought. The monarch felt that he had at last reached the highest level of happiness, and he then decided to celebrate his newfound power with his beloved daughter.

But his first joy quickly turned to sadness. King Midas's daughter, whom he cherished so very much, also became a lifeless, icy golden statue as soon as he stretched out to embrace her. Alas, now he could no longer hear her laughing or feel the warmth of her hug. Tragically, the king realized that the most precious things in his life, "the love of his family," had been lost because of his avarice and insatiable desire for more and more riches.

Tormented by solitude and beleaguered with remorse, King Midas wished he could undo the outcome of his wish. He traveled to the hallowed shrine of Dionysus and begged for divine clemency. In order to restore his daughter and the happiness he had now lost, he implored the god to rescind the accursed golden touch, even should it demand the forfeiture of his entire fortune in the process.

And so, persuaded by King Midas's genuine remorse and his new understanding of gratitude, Dionysus extended his divine absolution. The King was reunited with his daughter, and the golden malediction was lifted. He was extremely grateful after this encounter that he became a new man; he began to see the things that he did not see before, to appreciate the values of the treasures that he had previously taken for granted.

***Happiness cannot be experienced by accumulating wealth and material possessions alone.
True joy comes from recognizing the blessings that are already in our lives, building
relationships and love with the world around us, and having genuine moments of gratitude for
the beauty and wonders of life.***

Authors View

For humankind, it comes easily to fall into the treacherous snare of ingratitude, for we are habitually preoccupied with our insatiable wants and capricious desires. Every time that we spend too much time fixated on what we lack, we neglect all the abundance that already surrounds us. It is not scarcity that has engineered unhappiness, chaos, and disaster in the world; it is the insatiable nature of men.

And of course, let it be unequivocally understood, it is absolutely not a crime to want more from life. Ambitions and aspirations are the foundations of advancement and human flourishing, but what is dangerous is when we begin to tie our happiness to achieving those desires. If we postpone happiness, if we think to ourselves that we will only be happy once we accomplish a certain goal or obtain a certain possession, then we condemn ourselves to perpetual disillusionment. We should, with deliberate mindfulness, acknowledge and appreciate the blessings that already surround us. This is the first step to true happiness.

The unquenchable proclivity of human desires has long been acknowledged by economists. This is a fact; it is utterly futile to predicate our contentment solely upon external attainments. You'll find, but mostly too late, that when you finally get what you've been longing for, the sacrifices you made along the road have left gaps in other aspects of your life, such as relationships, mental lucidity, or even corporeal well-being. Furthermore, the attainment of a single objective invariably begets yet another desire, which perpetually tries to ensure the never-ending cycle of searching.

For it can subtly reconfigure the mind to presume that happiness is contingent and attainable only when the totality of one's desires is fulfilled, this disposition is dangerously pernicious. As a matter of fact, nobody can always have all that they desire, which, as we have already stated, renders such a pursuit inherently futile. The secret is to escape this trap and change one's interpretation of what it means to be happy. There is always something for which to be thankful, no matter how seemingly trivial or inconsequential, even during the worst times of life. Perception is altered by gratitude, which enables us to find serenity in the here and now and find light even in the darkest of moments.

What you choose to value and cherish in the now is what brings you true happiness, not what you lack or yearn for. Gratitude is more than just an emotion; it's a way of life, a daily choice to find the good in what you already have.

The Illusion of External Fulfillment

Because true fulfillment comes from within us, no external contingency may ever assure our contentment, no matter how much more we acquire. If we believe this, that anyone in our lives, or anything that we claim to own, can guarantee our happiness, then we've lost control; we've granted them total power over us. Naturally, as humans, we are designed to form emotional attachments to people and possessions; this is by no means a flaw. But when we begin to think and believe that they hold the key to our happiness, then this is a perspective that becomes flawed and can only perpetuate the cycle of dissatisfaction and disappointment.

The Venomous Effects of Ingratitude

Ingratitude is a virulent toxin with a serpentine whisper of discontent that makes even the sweet bitter; it fools us into thinking that we need more than a spark of happiness to be enough, so we ignore that spark in search of more. It is a dangerous kind of self-destruction; ingratitude corrodes the foundation of our capacity for appreciation.

Whenever we fail to be grateful, we become increasingly oblivious to the beauty and opportunities for development in even the most basic facets of our lives. We should, as a matter of imperative, develop a sincere appreciation for the little pleasures, successes, and relationships that already exist in our lives; to see opportunities where we previously saw limitations.

Illustrative Anecdote

During World War II, Europe was engulfed in turmoil and gloom. But amidst this madness of war, when men behaved like animals, there was kindness being shown somewhere in the Warsaw Ghetto, in the very heart of the Holocaust. This is the tale of a man of exceptional moral character and empathy.

Dr. Janusz Korczak consecrated his life to the noble cause of safeguarding the orphans of the Warsaw Ghetto. Though he had very little money and there was always this fear of violence and persecution, it did not stop him from establishing an oasis of love so that the kids in his care could find comfort and a sense of normalcy amidst the surrounding desolation.

The community that Korczak created was centered on cardinal virtues such as respect, gratitude, and dignity. He taught the kids to survive through appreciation for the small pleasures that they could find around them, even though the circumstances were most difficult. They enjoyed little things together, like dinner, a story, or even a beautiful flower in blossom in the surrounding grass.

Beyond the orphanage, he became a source of inspiration to the communities around him. Because of him, there was a growing atmosphere of gratitude and a sense of solidarity that took root among individuals who understood the value of standing together in such trying times; he aggressively sought out the local community's assistance. People gave generously, not only to the orphanage but also among themselves in the communities.

But as the war continued, the Nazis kept issuing orders that brought unfathomable sorrow and agony. One of such orders was the transfer of all Jews, including the kids in Korczak's care, to the concentration camps. Korczak had to make a decision, a decision that would determine his legacy.

He was given the opportunity to rescue himself, but he refused to leave the children under his care. Every message that he had preached was put to the test, but he understood how to show thanks and set a good example. The most crucial lesson that he was going to impart to the kids at that time was the importance of loyalty and compassion.

And so, Korczak and his kids made their last march in the direction of the trains that would take them to the death camps. This was the altruistic and unselfish deed of Janusz Korczak, even in the face of death, simply because he identified something for which he could be grateful: a purpose; an opportunity to be a source of hope.

Authors View

The understanding that imperfections are an intrinsic facet of human existence, and that no matter how we try, not all things will fit together perfectly, is essential if we are to keep a positive state of mind and find inner peace. We cannot aim for unattainable flawlessness or the tyranny of perfectionism; rather, we have to embrace the truth that both darkness and light are inexorable and complementary constituents of a complete whole.

As Korczak discerned in the midst of the Holocaust's misery, gratitude is a virtue that can be found even in the crucible of adversity, not only during prosperous and comfortable times. Actually, there is no such thing as surplus or deficiency of happiness. I have witnessed people who are perpetually miserable at both extremes of prosperity and poverty. Then, I have witnessed those who wouldn't trade their joy for anything, impervious to the abundance or paucity of their condition. Regardless of whether we view things positively or negatively, the proverbial glass half full or half empty, it is, at its core, a matter of psyche. Such perception inexorably transforms our apprehension of the world.

Affirmation

For whatever reason, I feel that living a life without gratitude is a disservice, even though I find myself here on Earth without having had a choice in it. I am deeply appreciative of the riches all around me, and I have resolved to make the most of what I have been given while striving to be the best version of myself every day.

Asking for sympathy weakens the core of who I am, and I am too strong for that, but I firmly believe in the value of asking for assistance when necessary. I understand how interconnected all people are, and I am appreciative of the connection and support that come from interacting with others. This is because bad circumstances in the past have taught me to be strong and wise, and good circumstances have taught me love, laughter, and kindness; I am grateful for them all.

Seeing that life is so brief, it is far too valuable to be consumed by regret and living in the past. So, I have decided to use appreciation as a guiding concept instead. I change my perspective from what is lacking to the benefits that are abundant, and I learn to appreciate the present and to find purpose in what I currently have.

Gratitude has a natural capacity to go beyond our personal lives and spread its transformational effect across the broader world. To embody thankfulness is to become a luminous conduit of benevolence, to spread joy to everyone that we meet. Our thankfulness is a gift, and this gift has the ability to uplift and encourage others to appreciate their own blessings. Thus, with this awareness, I solemnly affirm today that my happiness is governed neither by scarcity nor by profusion, because I already have so much to be grateful for.

Therefore, I disagree here and now with any idea that promotes merely existing without making a difference. I will not only exist; I will live. I will not only live; I will live effectively. I know that every act of appreciation, no matter how small, can have a positive ripple effect that impacts the lives of other people. I make this decision today as I start to investigate the “37 Laws of Happiness

& Joy” to live with gratitude as my compass. Even though life may be unpredictable and our time here is generally finite, I choose to find fulfillment in living an effective life. This is my decision.

Overview

My personal first commandment in the book of happiness is gratitude. And it is my subjective belief that there can be no true happiness without it; hence, I have always treated this law in my personal journey as immutable, and utterly non-negotiable, and it has always worked for me, it may work for you also. Life as we know it is full of uncertainties and unpredictability. There is no assurance that our goals and aspirations will result in the perfect life that we so fervently conjure in our imaginations, and there is no roadmap whatsoever that promises tomorrow. It is risky, even foolish, to gamble our happiness on such erratic and nebulous contingencies.

It's possible that you will survive to witness another sunrise, and maybe even a better one; but today, however flawed, unfinished, and occasionally difficult, is still yours. Maybe the grass looks greener on the other side; maybe it really is. But the grass under your feet is yours today, even if it doesn't sparkle the way that you want it to. The only reality you have is this very moment. So, what the hell! Not tomorrow, not the next tomorrow, but right now, you deserve to be happy.

2nd Act

The Law of the Moment

Quote

Why wait for tomorrow when you can start today? Why wait for the evening when you can start in the morning? Why wait for the next hour when you can start in this minute? Do not sabotage your own happiness by waiting.

Narrative of Admonition

Chioma was a lively young lady. She was, as many described her in her teens, naturally vivacious and effusively affectionate. It so happened that in her early twenties, she was deeply involved in a romantic engagement that she naively presumed would endure for a lifetime. But as time passed, the relationship started to fall apart: trust deteriorated and arguments increased in frequency. And so, it eventually reached a breaking point; her boyfriend unexpectedly ended things, and to add salt to injury, he married her best friend.

In the aftermath of the rupture, a tidal wave of anguish hit her so badly: heartache, betrayal, and loss. Many nights she spent reliving the disappointing moments, rehashing all conversations past, and analyzing every painful word that was said. She perceived herself as emotionally eviscerated, fractured beyond repair.

Years passed, but Chioma was unable to break free from the grip of that past. She was plagued by the memories of that failed love, and it clouded her judgment of what might be possible for her in the future. She saw all possible relationships through the prism of the pain that she had endured; so, she built up impenetrable firewalls to help protect her from any form of suffering in the future, and continued to live in the fear that the past would repeat itself. Her family and friends were concerned, and they tried to help her move on, but the emotional barriers that she had constructed became her prison. No one could get through to her.

Fear permeated not only her romantic life but also her relationships with friends and family. She struggled with the capacity to trust, always questioning people's intentions and looking for faults. Her constant state of hyper-vigilance and suspicion estranged her; she was always emotionally drained, which also seeped into the lives of those around her. Because she was unable to accept the present and let go of the past, she allowed the actions of an ordinary person to jail her indefinitely. She never lived in the moment; in fact, she never genuinely lived at all.

The Unfulfilled Dreams of Alexander

Alexander the Great was a powerful conqueror in antiquity who set out on a campaign of conquest with one goal: to create the largest empire the world had ever seen.

Alexander's military prowess and strategic genius were unmatched at the time, and so, he overran vast lands, defeated powerful adversaries, and toppled powerful kingdoms. But every time that he emerged victorious, his ambition increased; he became obsessed with the next conquest: more wealth, more power, and new lands to expand his empire.

As Alexander's empire expanded, his triumphs brought him experiences, people, and multifaceted civilizations, all of which he was unable to appreciate. Just like Chioma, who lived only in the past, Alexander lived only in the future.

To achieve his future ambitions, Alexander sacrificed the present. The most damaging part of this sacrifice was that he neglected the needs and desires of his own army. People can dream about the future, but can only live in the present. Alexander did not understand this and continued to push his

soldiers through the most grueling campaigns that tested their mental and physical fortitude. So many soldiers sacrificed their lives in the struggle for Alexander's insatiable ambition to become the world's greatest conqueror at all costs.

Alexander's conquests, as expected, increased the burden of ruling over such a vast empire; it was difficult to manage the various populations and territories. And yet, he ignored the current responsibilities of administration and governance in favor of future conquests, which opened his empire up to corruption and instability. Soon, all that he had painstakingly established began to fall apart from the inside, like an internal decay. In conclusion, as Alexander approached the eastern edge of the known world to finally achieve his dream, he became ill and died prematurely. Following Alexander's death, his empire fell apart into anarchy. Both external invasions and internal conflict brought all that he had laboriously constructed to collapse.

Authors View

The past is holding echoes that you cannot embrace, the future is whispering promises that you cannot yet touch. But today, today is warm in your hands, alive in your breath, begging to be lived before it slips away. Love it, hold it, give yourself to it; this is the only forever you will ever know.

Like Chioma, it can be difficult for anyone to let go of negative experiences because these negative experiences can become emotionally attached to us, like a dark cloud that looms perpetually over our lives. The influence of these experiences permeates our choices and relationships; they build fear into us: fear of being vulnerable to love, apprehension toward trust, and reluctance to embrace new opportunities. If we allow this fear to take hold of us, it compels us to withdraw into the safety of our shells, where we begin to think that we are safe; however, in doing so, we isolate ourselves from the world.

It's crucial to understand that to achieve real development and happiness, we should first let go of the negative grip that the past holds over us. It's healthy to savor good experiences from the past in the moment, but to dwell exclusively in the past is perilous. Likewise, living only in expectation of the future is also restrictive; we may run the risk of losing out on the beauty and latent potentialities that the present moment has to offer. As demonstrated in Alexander's paradigm, the future may turn into an illusory mirage that constantly promises bliss but remains perpetually out of grasp.

The present moment was designed using bricks from the past, and the future will be decided by the bricks we lay in the moment. To survive the past, we should lay new bricks in the moment, and to change the future, we should also set new foundations in the here and now. And so, this present moment is the only locus where we have any true agency and sovereignty. This is where the real magic of life happens.

Except for gleaning the wisdom, leave the baggage of the past and the anxieties of the future alone; find peace and contentment in this very moment. Do not pretend that the pain doesn't exist; it is absolutely human to let yourself feel the hurt, the anger, and the sadness. It is not abnormal to cry, scream into a pillow, or write it all down. But live in the moment.

After rock bottom comes the healing part, and transcendence through volition. It is like tending to a wound: you will need to clean it, let it air out, and maybe even put a little bit of love on it. This could mean that you find the courage for catharsis, maybe spend some time with nature, or do something that either distracts you or brings you some level of peace.

Finally, you have to make a conscious decision to let go. You're not forgetting; you're just choosing to stop letting the past define you. You are creating space within yourself. You are decluttering, throwing out the old, and making room for the new.

Illustrative Anecdote

Marie Curie revolutionized humanity's comprehension of physics and chemistry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though she unearthed phenomena hitherto unseen, it might astonish you to know that for even such an extraordinary individual, her existence was anything but an untroubled odyssey.

She faced a lot of challenges and disappointments in her journey through life, and to survive, she had to learn to find peace and inspiration in the here and now. She did this so well that it became like she had a sort of preternatural gift: an uncanny faculty to find joy and wonder in anything.

Imagine being a woman in an epoch where men called the shots, especially in science. There was a lot of unfairness; detractors who sought to impede her progress and proclaimed her unfit for the pursuit. The things she had to endure would have stopped many, but not her. She was driven by an irrepressible inner conflagration, a passion to learn and discover amazing things, like the aesthetic splendor of the cosmos and the enigmas of the atom. Like a child exploring a magical, hidden world, she just surrendered wholly to the sublime wonder of it all.

Of course, many times her experiments failed, and failure, especially in her kind of circumstances, comes with a lot of frustration. But she stayed focused on what she was doing at every given moment; she was always in a state of Flow that didn't permit much time for yesterday's regrets or tomorrow's anxieties.

Because Marie was so good at focusing on the present moment, this absolute focus allowed her to make some incredible discoveries. It was she who discovered the two elements, polonium and radium.

Her discoveries helped change the world with some amazing advancements in medicine and technology, things that we use every day. It is astonishing to contemplate that her ability to live in the moment and to wholly immerse herself in whatever she was doing led to such a huge impact on the world.

Beyond her work in the scientific field, this proclivity also helped her to get through some of the most trying times in her personal life. For example, when she lost her husband, Pierre Curie, in a fatal accident, she was so traumatized that it threatened her mental and emotional stability.

Although she was a world-renowned scientist and an indefatigably occupied woman, Marie was also a devoted mother. How she managed to harmonize both roles, many would deem ingenious.

She made sure to spend quality time with her daughters. She shared her knowledge with them, wanted them to be curious, to ask questions, and guided them to revere the sublimity of every fleeting moment.

Marie understood more than anyone that time flies, so she made the most of every day with her daughters. They went on adventures. They lived in the moment!

Authors View

The paradigm of inhabiting the present moment is explored and emphasized in the fields of positive psychology. Scientists have discerned that when one is truly here and now, a heightened sense of contentment and existential fulfillment naturally emerges.

One of the most vital modalities for inhabiting the present moment is through mindfulness, the disciplined practice of attending wholly to the immediate experience without prejudice or judgment. You become actually aware of your thoughts and feelings, as well as what you are sensing around you: the sounds, the smells, and the sights.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that mindfulness practices, like meditation and contemplative exercises, can seriously enhance holistic well-being. It functions almost like a cognitive reprieve. People who regularly practice mindfulness usually find that they experience diminished levels of stress, anxiety, and despondency. Mindfulness can also declutter and refine mental processes, which invariably heightens concentration and fortifies memory retention. If you can learn the disciplined practice of acknowledging phenomena as they truly are, you should acquire greater dexterity in regulating emotions and managing exigent circumstances.

Living in the moment transcends mere awareness; it represents total immersion, to authentically savor life's exquisite fragments, like really tasting a delicious meal, watching a sunset as you feel the warmth of the sun on your face and the breeze in your hair, or even a conversation with someone that you love and you really listen to them intimately and holistically. You absorb these experiences wholly and enlist every faculty of perception to amplify their richness. In doing so, you appreciate these things no matter how small and make them truly special.

Have you ever been so engrossed in something, like playing a game, painting, or even just totally focused on a conversation, that you completely lose track of time? The Law of Flow is another facet of the science of present-moment living. It is a state of total immersion where one's consciousness and actions converge seamlessly in complete symbiosis with the activity at hand.

Rumination is insidious; it is like getting mired in a quagmire: you keep going around and around, feeling miserable and not getting anywhere. It is a loop of perpetual replay of past mistakes and the worry of what might happen tomorrow. When you notice this pattern, do what you can to break free; it is an enemy to your psychological equilibrium.

Overview

To live in the moment, you are not required to efface the memories of where you have journeyed from, nor to disregard the aspirations and reveries that you envision for your future. Your past

experiences and your hopes for the future are like the two ends of a rope; they guide you through the continuum of life.

A ship needs an anchor, but it also needs a destination. Your past experiences give you stability, and your dreams for the future give you purpose and direction.

Imagination fuels the world; it is the primordial spark that ignites and summons our internal creation into tangible reality. Take a look at all the amazing things that we have in our modern existence, like airplanes, computers, and even something as deceptively simple as the chocolate chip cookie. Inventors and pioneers dared to dream, to look beyond the confines of the present moment and seize possibilities from a world that did not yet exist. They harnessed the power of their imaginations to turn their dreams into reality, and because of them, our world is a much richer, more exciting place.

However, the truth is that to live a fulfilling life, you have to be present. Right here, right now, the present moment is where our actions have any immediate impact; it is the realm where we have agency, where we can make choices that shape our reality.

3rd Act

The Law of Seed Time and Harvest Time

(Trusting the process)

Quote

“Look at the stone cutter hammering away at the rock, perhaps 100 times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet, at the 101st blow, it will split in two, and I know it was not the last blow that did it, but all that had gone before.” - Jacob Riis.

Authors View

Let's look at the analogy of a seed when it is planted: it enters a state of darkness beneath the ground, where certain portions of it must decompose before it can emerge and spring forth to life. Yet the farmers have faith because they know they have followed the right steps and adhered to the rules that govern planting. The farmers patiently wait for the seeds to sprout, nurturing them through irrigation, weeding, fertilizers, pesticides, and more; they maintain faith in the process until harvest.

We now live in a world where speed is supreme. Technology, as we know it, is propelling existence in its ever-accelerating evolution; the internet delivers answers to us in seconds, and we can order anything that we want and have it delivered in a short time. Consequently, we have become habituated to this culture of instantaneous gratification, and it is changing how we do everything.

On the one hand, this velocity has been amazing. Businesses can operate with amplified efficiency, new ideas proliferate like wildfire, and everyone, irrespective of geography, can have access to information almost at the speed of light. However, there's a flip side too: an addiction. Let me give you an example to illustrate this addiction: when you are trying to surf the web or engage with applications on your device and the response lags or is not giving you what you want immediately, it is almost reflexive to experience a sting of irritation; this, in isolation, is entirely natural. You might even consider upgrading to a more advanced model, which is wholly rational. The problem, however, is that outside of our consciousness, we are beginning to transpose this mechanized paradigm onto every dimension of existence, including our interpersonal relationships. You can see the impact of this problem just by looking into the street: the rising rates of crime, depression, and divorce. Everyone these days seems to be from a dysfunctional home.

It is this constant rush that is changing us in ways that we have not even realized. As we are always on the go now, always chasing the next thing, always being bombarded with information that we cannot even finish processing, and always expecting everything instantly, we are losing our patience and perpetually living with frustration every day; it is harder to stick with things or build strong relationships like this.

Then there's this constant fear of missing out (FOMO). It makes us feel like we always have to be “ON,” always connected. This can lead to burnout and a work-life imbalance.

Speed and efficiency are invaluable, of course, but it is imperative to acknowledge their inherent limitations. Some of the best things in life require time and patience to develop, like building solid relationships, learning a new skill, perhaps, or finding a hobby that you love. But with this reality that we are faced with, we should bring to our attention that we have been disillusioned by the concept of the fast life, for when it seems that things are slow, we are quick to impatience and automatically try to rush the process.

If you plant a seed, you can't force it to grow, but if you give it the right conditions and let nature take its course, it may eventually blossom into something beautiful.

Let's be honest, we all want to achieve our goals as fast as possible, especially when we see others succeeding. One of the cardinal dangers of not trusting the process is the temptation to take shortcuts: trying to find ways to skip the work and bypass the necessary steps. In this way, we are bound to miss out on crucial lessons. It is like trying to learn to play the piano without practicing; you might be able to play a few simple tunes, but you'll never truly master the instrument.

Real joy and fulfillment come from the journey itself, the process, the being, the challenges you overcome; it is the identity that gives meaning to living, that makes the story worth telling. By forgoing this process, you're cheating yourself out of that experience, out of the satisfaction that comes from achieving something existentially meaningful.

Another hazard is the psychological toll engendered by impatience: to perpetually dwell on the future, yearning for results that have not yet materialized, and robbing ourselves of present joy and contentment. It is like living on a treadmill, never satisfied, always wanting more and more. This constant pressure can really take a toll on our emotional well-being because it creates negative feelings of stress, anxiety, and even inadequacy; it steals from us the gratitude and joy of simply being.

When we learn to trust the process, a sense of peace washes over us because we can finally relax and enjoy the ride instead of constantly worrying about the destination. Patience is a virtue.

Impatience can lead to rash decision-making. If you've ever driven a car in a hurry before, especially on unfamiliar routes, you may have had a bad experience with a detour sign. Because you were in a hurry, you just took the detour without looking at the map and assumed that it was the fastest route, and then that detour led you to a dead end, or even worse, into a dangerous area or circumstance.

Owing to impetuous decisions, many times we just see opportunities and grab them without thinking or considering long-term consequences. In our careers, for example, we might jump from job to job to chase quick money and neglect the inexorable chain of causality over time. In the end, however, this may create disorientation and a lack of purpose for us. Such a deficiency of discernment and judicious foresight can have detrimental effects on our personal and professional lives. From personal experience, I lost a lot of time and money chasing ill-fated business ventures that I had no business involving myself with, until I decided to become very deliberate with my pursuits; I decluttered and went for foundations with sustainability.

Illustrative Anecdote

Winter gives way to spring, summer brings warmth, and autumn brings harvest. There's a natural rhythm to everything, a flow that guides us through the continuum of life.

It's the same with our dreams. Just like a tiny seed needs time and care to grow into a strong tree, our dreams also need time and patience to blossom. We can't force things to happen overnight; we should entrust ourselves to the process, build our dreams with hard work, smart work, and dedication, and then allow them to unfold naturally.

During the early 20th century, a visionary inventor named Thomas Edison set out on a mission to create a practical and commercially viable electric light bulb that actually worked and could be used by everyone. He was absolutely convinced that this invention would change the world forever, and he was right.

But Edison's journey, as you might already surmise, came with many failures. He tried, but the light bulbs stubbornly refused to function as intended; some burned out too fast, some lacked sufficient luminosity. The path of least resistance would have been to give up, but Edison remained indefatigable because whatever he did, he did with absolute clarity.

So, year after year, Edison and his team experimented with different materials and tested various filament designs. When questioned about his failures, Edison said, “I haven't failed; I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” This kind of determination to succeed was what kept him going, no matter how many times he stumbled.

After years of countless experiments and setbacks, there was finally a breakthrough. They discovered that a special kind of bamboo, when treated in a certain way (carbonized bamboo filament), could hold electricity and create long-lasting, steady light. This was a historical moment of triumph! On October 21, 1879, Edison successfully demonstrated a functional electric light bulb to the world, which shone brightly for over 13 hours.

The world stood in awe as it witnessed the birth of a new era of illumination. This transformation completely impacted humanity on a global scale, all because one man and his consortium entrusted the process and obstinately refused to capitulate.

Authors View

The concept of seed time and harvest time, or trusting the organic progression of events, agrees with the principles and empirical frameworks of positive psychology. Positive psychology is a field of study that focuses on the factors that contribute to human flourishing, resilience, and holistic well-being, or, to put it, ***“what makes people happy and thrive.”***

It is absolutely human that we can get stuck on the idea of reaching our goals or yearn for the desired outcomes that promise joy and fulfillment with immediacy. But the science of happiness, when we study it, shows that true happiness is not just about reaching those goals; it is even more about the journey itself.

It is this trust in the process that creates a sense of inner equanimity; with equanimity comes the clarity to see any challenge as a chance to learn and grow, to be able to stay positive even when things don't go as planned. With equanimity comes the clarity to accept that setbacks and challenges are a normal part of life's continuum. If we can make peace with this, then we can appreciate and savor even the small wins and celebrate the progress, even if it seems insignificant at times.

Overview

In the law of seed time and harvest time, also known as trusting the process, to have a heightened cognizance of the precise stage that we occupy in any given circumstance is indispensable. This

kind of awareness usually helps us to avoid frustration, despondency, and the resulting confusion and unhappiness that can arise when progress in life appears slow. Trusting the process is quintessential. Personally, I have enshrined this principle with remarkable efficacy; I never allow myself to become discouraged or frustrated when progress seems sluggish, as long as I know that I am doing the right thing.

However, it is important to distinguish between executing the right action, being on the right path, and doing the wrong thing while expecting the right results; we can only trust the process when the process is right. No matter how fast we run or the magnitude of resources we expend in our journey, we will remain perpetually estranged from our intended destination if our trajectory is misaligned or our orientation is fundamentally misguided.

If we find ourselves in a flawed, misguided, or stagnant trajectory or enterprise, it demands a rare synthesis of maturity, humility, and honesty to admit that we have been wrong. There is authentic persistence, and there is stubbornness masquerading as perseverance. We cannot revive a dead flower by watering it; we should recognize when it is beyond revival. We should develop the maturity to view our lives from a panoramic, extrinsic vantage rather than a tunnel-bound lens, and conduct honest self-assessments. Also, while it is definitely unproductive to let ourselves be swayed by others' opinions like a fidget spinner, we should nonetheless have the humility to respond positively to criticism, to approach it without emotional attachments, and to have the presence of mind to transform it into constructive feedback, just as organizations assess their products to improve them.

No plan is infallible. A plan in the process of execution is like an automobile; sometimes it develops malfunctions, and we should consult the mechanic and replace certain parts for the car to move again. The overarching mandate is to educate ourselves in whatever aspect of life we are trying to build, whether it's a relationship, a business, a career, or so on. Education is fundamental; we should learn everything that we can about our endeavors. Through comprehensive erudition, we can become better equipped to discern whether the prevailing demographics, trends, and ancillary variables substantiate the viability of our undertakings. In the context of building relationships, this can enable us to grow in knowledge, skills, and wisdom, to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the individuals with whom we interact.

The benefits of constant self-education cannot be overstated. Devise a plan that carries an almost axiomatic certainty of success, refine it continuously, and entrust yourself to the process. Along the way, you may encounter difficulties and unanticipated contingencies that come from external vicissitudes, internal impediments, and circumstances beyond your volition. Nevertheless, you have to try and believe in yourself. Look at the analogy of a seed when it is planted: it enters a state of darkness beneath the ground, where certain portions of it must decompose before it can emerge and spring forth to life. Yet, farmers have faith because they know that they have followed the right steps and adhered to the rules that govern planting. So, they patiently wait for the seeds to sprout and thereafter advance through the next stages of irrigation, weeding, fertilization, pest management, and beyond; they maintain this faith in the process until harvest. This is how we should approach our lives with equanimity. In all things, we need only to do the required work and thereafter, trust the inexorable process.

4th Act

The Law of Self-Sufficiency, Belief, and Internal Abundance

Quote

More than you know, you are enough! All other is only an addition.

Narrative of Admonition

There was a young artist in Paris back in the 1800s who believed with such passion that his art was going to lead him out of poverty to a life of wealth and fame. But one cardinal truth that he failed to understand was that, first of all, regardless of how caught up we are in our dreams, one should acquire Self-Sufficiency and discover an abiding sense of fulfillment within the self.

Seeking External Validation

Vincent desperately wanted approval from prestigious art academies and respected critics; his belief was that their acceptance would prove to the world that he was a true artist, and that once this was achieved, it would guarantee his success. But like all pursuits, value is subjective, and even valuable works of profound merit will sometimes, or perhaps most times, get rejected before they are accepted. Vincent was not prepared for this phase of existence, and each time he was rejected, his confidence waned, and he started to doubt himself; he descended ever further into despondency. Vincent became so obsessed with getting approval from others that he would later relinquish all faith in himself.

Despite the prodigious talent that he possessed, his career struggled to gain traction. Art galleries did not like his unique and unconventional style, and collectors of the era were not interested in buying his work. With rejection compounding upon rejection, the pressure became too much, which caused him severe frustration; he soon descended into a dark abyss of poverty, loneliness, and mental anguish. He became a shadow of his former self and was no longer able to see beyond the despair that clouded his mind. Tragically, Vincent reached his breaking point and surrendered his life. Only then did the world begin to listen.

Now The World Really Listened

In the aftermath of Vincent's tragic demise, everything suddenly changed. People finally started to see the incredible value and brilliance of his art; all his works that the world had ignored miraculously emerged from the shadows to capture the hearts and minds of art enthusiasts and collectors everywhere. The kind of emotions in his paintings struck a chord with those who saw them that was just impossible to resist. People were moved. Even those critics who once scoffed at his unconventional style began to hail him as a visionary artistic pioneer who defied the norms of his time.

So, the demand for Vincent's paintings skyrocketed, and they began to command significant prices in the art market, which eventually led to galleries and museums scrambling for the privilege of exhibiting his magnum opuses.

The world doesn't know what to believe in; you are the one who teaches the world to believe in you by believing in yourself.

Authors View

The Perilous Void

In a world that focuses so much on external validation and the chase for material success, there is always this danger of disregarding self-reliance and intrinsic self-belief. To ignore these crucial facets of existence can have serious, detrimental consequences that permeate every other dimension of our lives.

If people rely too much on what others think of them, they get stuck in a perpetual cycle of seeking approval. Because they tether their self-worth to external determinants, they relinquish sovereignty over their own existence and felicity. The problem is that external validation is unreliable; it has a fickle nature. It can disappear quickly and be inconsistent, changing based on what society thinks is important at any given time.

In fact, external validation is so exhausting. People live in bespoke realities, which render their assessments subjective. So, how the hell can you please everyone? Without a fortified sense of self-reliance and intrinsic conviction, one can succumb to feelings of vacuity, disorientation, and existential dissatisfaction because they are always in a perpetual loop, chasing external measures of worth that they cannot control.

Neglecting self-reliance and self-belief can lead to the destructive habit of constantly comparing yourself to others. Every time people measure their worth based on what others have achieved, they inadvertently sabotage their own potential and diminish their sense of self. Comparison breeds self-doubt, self-criticism, and a never-ending quest to match or surpass others. It is dangerous to lose sight of your own strengths, unique talents, and the unique path that you are on.

To tether your intrinsic value to the perceptions of others is to allow your self-esteem to become perilously fragile, susceptible to the slightest criticism or rejection. It can plunge you into an emotional rollercoaster, as your self-worth swings with every interaction or arbitrary judgment. The warning signs are chronic feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and a need for constant reassurance from others.

The Awakening of Self-Sufficiency and Belief

There is a light that will lodge itself on the walls of your mind, a light that has the ability to reconstruct your entire being in unexpected ways. So much so that even those who knew you before would struggle to recognize any trace of your former self.

The journey of reclaiming self-sufficiency and belief starts with self-reflection, introspection, and a willingness to question the societal narratives that usually undermine our self-worth. Our intrinsic strengths, passions, and values are what form the foundations of self-reliance and belief; it is incredibly important for us to figure out our proclivities, what we love, and who and what we dream of being. We do not need permission from others to do this; we only need to look inside ourselves.

One of the most efficacious ways to do all these things is by learning skills that make us strong and independent at a salutary level, it could be financial literacy, relational acumen, emotional regulation, adept problem-solving, striving daily to become the best versions of ourselves, and having faith in who we are and what we do. If we master these competencies, then we may be better

equipped to deal with challenges, adjust to new situations, and architect our lives in accordance with our own deliberate vision.

The root of diminished self-faith or an excessive dependence on others mostly comes from an inner sense of disorientation and an inability to recognize the inherent magnificence that is already residing within us. To embody authenticity, one should wholly embrace their true essence and the values that genuinely matter, even if they diverge from societal prescriptions or collective expectations. It is the freedom to define one's own path. Only you can do this for yourself; either you do it, or you will be condemned to a dreamless solitude by the same systems to which you have sold your freedom.

Illustrative Anecdote

Helen Keller, born in 1880, was an extraordinary woman who faced some spirit-breaking hardships right from when she was young. When she was just 19 months old, she got very sick, and the illness rendered her both deaf and blind. Suddenly plunged into a world of darkness and silence, it appeared inconceivable that she could ever find any path to independence, confidence, or a rich inner life. It wasn't even a question; the odds were stacked, supported by every single logic at the time.

The Power of Determination

Even though Helen faced serious challenges due to her physical limitations, she still maintained a great spirit. And then there was Anne Sullivan, a very helpful teacher who helped her through some difficult times. Helen learned to communicate by feeling things and connecting words with objects. It wasn't easy, but she was determined; then, slowly, she began to understand the world around her and to believe in her own ability to learn and grow.

In the end, Helen Keller accomplished more than anyone could have imagined. She graduated from Radcliffe College with excellent grades and several honors; she was, in fact, the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. She redefined what the word “impossible” meant.

Advocating for Others

To speak out and make a difference, Helen began to devote her life to fighting for the rights of people with disabilities. She traveled extensively to give speeches and raise awareness about the difficulties faced by those with sensory impairments.

She became a great source of inspiration to the entire world, even long after she had passed away. You can do more research on her struggles and triumphs through her autobiography, “The Story of My Life.” Remember, every one of us has the latent potential to transform and ascend, provided we can learn to believe in ourselves and tap into our own inner strengths.

Authors View

Essential dimensions of the human experience, like “self-sufficiency and internal belief,” are far from being just subjective or abstractly philosophical; they are backed by empirical science (psychological and cognitive frameworks that illuminate how the things that we do and believe in reflect on our personal growth, our ability to bounce back from challenges, and find true happiness).

Research in neuroscience has shown that our brains are incredibly flexible with an extraordinary capacity for transformation. Several studies that have been conducted have found that our beliefs and self-conceptions are not fixed traits; we can actually change them through intentional efforts. Neural plasticity allows us to modify our beliefs, self-image, and self-perception, which in turn leads to self-sufficiency and a stronger belief in our own abilities.

Another great work on self-efficacy from Albert Bandura also shows how crucial it is to believe in ourselves and how much it affects what we can achieve. These studies have consistently shown that people who strongly believe in themselves are more likely to set challenging goals, persevere amid adversity, and ultimately succeed. It doesn't just stop at how we help ourselves; confident people have also been known to help other people develop belief in themselves.

The science of building independence and self-belief provides solid proof that these qualities can be developed and strengthened. Anybody can be truly transformed.

Overview

Once upon a time, there was a wild rumor going around the countryside about a crazy challenge: swim across a treacherous pool teeming with ravenous crocodiles, and you'd win a huge amount of money. As soon as the daunting nature of the quest became evident, everyone thought it was absolutely insane, and no one even considered trying such a perilous feat; it was deemed inconceivable. As people gathered around talking about how mad anyone would be to enter the water, a man fearlessly jumped into the pool and sliced across the water with incredible speed. Before the crocodiles could even fathom any disturbance, he was already on the other side. Everybody who saw this was completely stunned and amazed; it didn't seem ordinary. In fact, it was as if the man had superhuman abilities that defied the limits of ordinary mortals.

The crowd erupted in cheers, everyone staring in awe at his bravery and courage. Still catching his breath, though, the man blurted out a surprising question: “WHO PUSHED ME INTO THE WATER?” It was a very dramatic moment; the truth is that someone had actually shoved him from behind, and he'd had to swim for his life in a pool full of hungry crocodiles.

Sometimes, it takes an external force, an unexpected catalyst, to awaken the extraordinary potentials hidden within us.

We usually sell ourselves short and doubt our ability to achieve great things. But when faced with a seemingly impossible challenge, like the crocodile-infested waters of life, we might discover hidden reserves of courage and resilience within ourselves. It is during the tough times, when we are pushed into the unknown, that many of us truly see what we are capable of.

We all possess a dormant superhuman essence, just awaiting the call to action. All we need to unearth the depths of our potential is to dare to challenge our perceived limitations and behold these extraordinary facets of ourselves come alive.

When you believe in yourself, you will become bigger than certain situations; your confidence grows, pressure dissipates, and faith in the process of life strengthens. But the dangers of low self-esteem are the stifling of potential, the acceptance of mediocrity, and the perpetual cycle of self-doubt. Low self-esteem is a venomous poison. We are stars of our own, but we usually don't see this; it sometimes takes a crash into the heavens of hope for our gaze to be redirected from the distant stars out of our reach to the ones already within us.

Unmasking the Narcissist's Grip

We humans are social creatures, meaning we rely on our connections with others to thrive. These relationships can either uplift or hurt us, contingent upon how we interpret and manage them. Dealing with narcissists can be an arduous ordeal, fraught with psychological affliction. These individuals show no qualms whatsoever, tearing down our self-confidence, to deliberately make us feel worthless and guilty in order to exert control over us. To fight back against their manipulative tactics, we need the courage, strength, and knowledge to protect our mental and physical liberty.

One of the most effective ways to protect ourselves from emotional manipulation is to become self-sufficient. When we learn to rely on ourselves, we will unlock the ability to create a myriad of options. It is crucial to avoid getting too attached to anything or anyone who can control how we feel about ourselves or hold the power to dictate the meaning of our lives. This gives us the strength to deal with disappointments and walk away from unhealthy situations without unnecessary pain.

Self-Love and True Fulfillment

Loving yourself is the beginning of genuine happiness. Without a deep, lasting love for ourselves, no amount of love from others can truly fill the void within. Instead, we will get stuck in a cycle of self-destruction, hurting those who dare to try to love us. Each of us has the responsibility to seek self-discovery, to find our own happiness, and to learn to rely on ourselves. We should let go of the misguided idea that others hold the key to our happiness, because that's a burden they can't and shouldn't carry. It is unfair if we demand this of others.

In whatever we do, we should always remember that the path to freedom is in taking responsibility for ourselves. If we can truly trust ourselves and believe in our own abilities, then it is easier to break free from the chains of dependence and the need to fit in. We will become masters of our own destinies and architects of our souls, free from the expectations and limitations that other people set.

This journey to believing in yourself can be tough; it will require a reevaluation of your self-perception and that of societal narratives. But in the end, it will all be worth it.

5th Act

The Law of Purpose and Meaning, Self-Discovery and Fulfillment

Quote

*“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves,”
Viktor Frankl.*

Narrative of Admonition

There is a quote by Viktor Frankl that makes so much sense to me. He said, Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.

There was a young man named David who was always enveloped in the heavy cloak of his parents' expectations from the time anyone could remember. His family was steeped in tradition and social standing, and so there was no space for him to explore who he truly was or to chase his own ambitions. It was always, “You have to be this, do this, and do that, David. That field of study or career is not good for the family's name, David,” and so forth and so on.

From the time that he was a child, his parents, down to the details, mapped out a future for him; they even handpicked a career path that aligned with their own desired prestige and social standing. In their hearts, they wanted the best for their son, or so they thought, but in their search for societal validation, they unknowingly clipped his wings and crushed his spirit.

David was forced to succeed at all costs, but his living didn't hold any resonance with his true desires. He buried his own dreams and suppressed his innermost longings, for he was unable to escape the pressure his parents put on him. He was forbidden to follow the things that really gave him meaning; those things were seen as trivial and unworthy pursuits in his family's eyes.

David continued to feel suffocated as he grew older; generally, the life he'd been pushed into drained him of vitality and left him hollow. Every day, he woke up feeling like someone else and not himself, just going through the motions, without any real purpose or meaning. Externally, people saw him as successful and envied him, but internally, he was lost and adrift.

David related to people, but it was all just superficial facades; masks he wore to keep up appearances. In his heart of hearts, he wanted all that he had lost from childhood, but he was completely helpless.

To escape the pain in his soul, David turned to vices that brought temporary relief. Alcohol became his crutch, gradually, sip by sip, but still, he couldn't escape from the abyss. His dependency on escapism worsened. To make matters worse, his family criticized him harshly; his father would remind him time and time again how much he had invested in him.

David began to feel like a loser, and no matter how much he tried, he just couldn't measure up to his family's expectations. His self-belief collapsed, and his mental and emotional well-being deteriorated rapidly. It was the burden of a life without purpose and without meaning. He was trapped in a suffocating cycle of playing by the rules; he hated his career, hated his family, and hated himself. But every time that he thought of breaking free, the fear of disappointing his family and losing their love held him back.

In the depths of his despair, his spirit finally broke. He was so overwhelmed by the hopelessness of his situation that he made a tragic choice. Life was simply too much for him to bear.

Authors View

Not every person you see is actually in this world with us; some are merely reflections of what ought to or ought not to be. They can only become tangible creatures the day they realize why they were born; they are not tangible creatures just because they were born.

In a similar vein, memories and deeds allow people to live forever; you do not necessarily die the day you run out of breath. Death is an option. But you never really lived if you didn't know why you were here in the first place.

During those quiet interludes when we're alone with our ruminations and the worries of the world become heavy, many of us wonder what all this is for: Why do we put up with life? Are we truly living, or just drifting through perfunctory motions in a world that always demands our conformity? The truth is that deep within each of us, we all crave something more: a chance, maybe, to escape the rules society sets and find out who we really are. We can't be happy if we are lost in a world that has been interpreted for us.

The Awakening

Stop for a minute; allow your anxieties to simply linger where they are. I want you to notice how exquisitely precious and exquisitely fragile life truly is, because this is when you will truly wake up. We can't stop the world from being a pile of expectations, bills, and obligations; it's what it's designed to be. But you and I know that beneath the surface, there is a flicker of discontent. We don't really have to be what the world is, and we don't need to stop the world from being what it is for us to awaken from the lethargy of mediocrity and discover the true essence of our being. Desire itself knows no terminus; what ceases is only the futile chase. We have to stop chasing what is unattainable or ultimately meaningless, especially external validation, and focus on our essence.

To live a truly fulfilling existence, we should interrogate the conventions that govern our lives, and I'm not saying we should abandon responsibilities; no, responsibilities give meaning to life. We need only to sort through them with courage and to apprehend the implications of the choices we embrace thereafter. After all, how long do we have to stay here on Earth that we should waste it? We should break free from the deleterious façade of societal expectations, expectations that have ensnared and subjugated us for far too long. We have been chasing the illusions of misplaced success, trapped in the cycle of acquiring material toys, chasing titles, and appeasing the whims of others. But deep down, we know there is nothing external we own or anyone in our lives that can guarantee our happiness. True fulfillment is architected within; it is never bestowed from without.

Possession does not engender purpose; you can have the whole world and still not find fulfillment. You have to try and let go of the masks and the act you put on to be someone you're not. Plumb the depths of your soul and gather the fragmented remnants of yourself dispersed across your lived experiences. Allow your passions to lead you to a life filled with meaning. But most importantly, be kind to yourself and embrace your vulnerabilities.

Trials and Triumphs

As you already know, things are easier said than done. This journey to finding purpose is far from easy. In fact, in most circumstances, growth will come from the crucible of adversity; it may

become harder before it gets better. There will be times when you will doubt yourself and feel overwhelmed by uncertainty, but you should never give up. You may never be strong unless you've been tested; it is through challenges that we become stronger. Build and surround yourself with a tribe of kindred spirits. Remember, the situations you're currently going through are not isolated; many others have faced similar struggles and came out stronger, and so will you. You only need to let your purpose be your compass; let it guide every decision that you make and influence every part of your being. Just make sure that your actions and goals align with your values and what you truly want. It is natural for the future to stir apprehension, but do not languish in dread of the unknown; life is far too ephemeral for such surrender.

Illustrative Anecdote

One of the most heartbreaking and terrifying chronicles of human affliction in recorded history is that of Viktor Frankl. While imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, this man faced the kind of pain, bereavement, and existential despair that defied comprehension. Still, even in the face of such unspeakable atrocity, he found this truth: *The power of purpose and meaning can help anyone overcome even the most devastating of circumstances.*

Viktor Frankl was an eminent psychiatrist and a devoted husband and son. During the war, he was ripped away from his family and cast into the brutal world of the Holocaust. Auschwitz was the definition of horror; he lost not only his freedom there but also his sense of self, his dignity, and his belief in humanity. He lost it all to death, including his own family, so much so that he was consumed by grief and despair.

But there is a window that opens in the realm of the broken; it is the Law of the Broken that when all is lost and when identity has been erased, a man is most dangerous because he can become anything. And so did Viktor begin a desperate search for meaning right there in the midst of the camp's senseless cruelty.

Through the bleakness and suffering, Frankl was looking for a vestige of a lifeline to grasp, a *raison d'être*, no matter how small, to breathe in the suffocating darkness. It was then that he found purpose: that if he could find meaning in his suffering, he could transcend the physical and emotional torment inflicted upon him. And he did find the meaning he was looking for. As a psychiatrist, he started developing a revolutionary approach to therapy, logotherapy, which emphasized the search for meaning as a central aspect of human existence.

Actually, this discovery was made when he saw a level of unexpected kindness in the face of such unspeakable cruelty. He witnessed acts of selflessness, compassion, and sacrifice within the camp that gave him hope. Prisoners shared their meager rations of food and offered words of comfort to each other. These acts of humanity, no matter how small, fueled Frankl's determination to survive. It was inspiring that even in such a dark time, the human capacity for goodness and compassion could still exist.

Finding Purpose in Service

The deeper Frankl explored the idea of purpose, the more he became a source of strength and inspiration to the other prisoners. He believed strongly that life had meaning and that this meaning could be a light to those who had lost all semblance of hope. He started to hold sessions, conversations, and brief moments of comfort. These sessions proved very effective; the prisoners began to believe in their own value and their strength of spirit.

Not that the daily brutality and agonizing pain of the concentration camp stopped, but how he interpreted them changed. From the selfless services that he rendered using his expertise as a psychiatrist, Frankl realized that beyond his own purpose, there was greater meaning in helping others. It was there in the camp that Frankl developed the core ideas that would later become his influential book, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

The Triumph of Meaning

Frankl understood intimately the only freedom that steel and concrete cannot ever steal: the freedom to choose how we respond to suffering. This understanding later became the foundation of his philosophy: *while we can't control what happens to us, we can always choose how we react and find meaning even in the most desperate situations.*

Following his release from the camps, Frankl became a well-known writer and speaker. He dedicated his life to the sharing of his experiences and teachings. His most famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, documented his journey and the place of purpose and meaning. For Frankl, a man, no matter what the circumstances are, must take responsibility for authoring the trajectory of his own life.

Authors View

The Last of Human Freedoms

In the darkest corners of human existence, where it felt like all hope was lost, in those terrible places, those desolate huts of suffering, men are stripped of everything that made them human: their dignity, their families, and their sense of self. This is what Viktor Frankl discovered: humans can endure so much when there is a sense of responsibility attached, when there is so much importance and meaning to life. “The last of the human freedoms” is the sovereign capacity to determine our response to whatever vicissitudes befall us in any circumstance. No one can take this freedom away from us; only we can.

The men who walked through the huts, sharing their last bit of bread, found a deeper meaning in life from what they did. In giving to others, they paradoxically reclaimed something within themselves, and by comforting others, they found comfort too.

Liberating the Meaning of Life

Throughout history, a strategy as ancient as civilization itself has been wielded by those in positions of power and authority: the idea that he who controls the meaning of a man's life basically owns the man. Slave owners, politicians, and insatiably power-driven individuals have used this tactic

for ages to control and manipulate the masses. Sadly, this paradigm permeates nearly every facet of our existence, from what we learn in school and the jobs we choose, to our religious beliefs, cultural and traditional constructs, and even the very frameworks through which we perceive tribe, race, and identity.

There's a paradox, a tricky conundrum about freedom: as long as we have it, there's the ever-present threat of its exploitation, a danger that someone will try to use it to their own advantage. Almost every construct that shapes our existence, save for our immutable genetic code, is fundamentally orchestrated by the credos, decrees, and dogmas contrived by others. These invisible chains dictate the very meaning of our existence, for they are labyrinthine prisons within a reality not of our own design.

However, despite this threatening panorama, the most important truth to remember is that ***“if other people can shape our lives like clay, we too have the divine ability to reshape the meaning that defines us.”***

The Art of Redefining Happiness

In the journey of happiness, to get trapped in what everyone else says a good life should look like is a continuous hostage situation that plagues the majority of people. To start this journey of discovering and creating who we are and what happiness means to us, we first have to understand that happiness is not a fixed destination but a fluid and ever-evolving state of being, as we all are, even as we seek a residual or autopilot state of happiness. Liberation requires courage, for the path less traveled is mostly strewn with obstacles and doubts. This path less traveled is the one to become the authors of our stories, the narrators of our emotions, and the architects of our destinies. The human spirit is ever capable of reclaiming its sovereignty.

The “Why” of existence

Viktor recalled two prisoners who talked of committing suicide. Both men used the typical argument: that they had nothing more to expect from life.

The challenge was to show the men that life was still expecting something from them.

“We found, in fact, that for the one, it was his child whom he adored and who was awaiting him in a foreign country.

“For the other, it was a thing, not a person. This was a scientist who had written a series of books that still needed to be finished. His work could not be done by anyone else, any more than another person could ever take the place of the father in his child’s affections ...

“A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life.

“He knows the ‘why’ for his existence and will be able to bear almost any ‘how’.”

- Viktor Frankl

The Resilience of Purpose: Discovering Meaning in the “Why” of Existence

Viktor Frankl recognized the futility of pursuing happiness as a terminal objective. Instead, he posited that our existence necessitates a more transcendent sense of purpose: something we're called to do, someone we're meant to help, a deed we need to accomplish, or a legacy we want to leave behind. From the story of the two prisoners who were thinking about ending their lives, we can see how powerful it can be to find meaning in our existence. This, in my subjective experience, is the non-negotiable primacy of the “why” behind our lives and how a sense of responsibility and connection to something bigger than ourselves can spark an incredible amount of resilience.

The Despair of Meaninglessness

Meaningless is the grave where the living are buried, so that they might cease to exist even though they're still alive. When you're suffering and feeling hopeless, meaninglessness creeps in. Next, you find yourself believing that life has nothing more to offer, no purpose left. The two prisoners thinking about suicide perfectly illustrate this despair: they see their lives as empty and pointless. It's a state of immense vulnerability that we can drown in if we lose sight of the “why” behind what we do and how we contribute to the world.

When a person becomes conscious of the responsibilities they hold, whether to a loved one waiting for them to come home, to an elderly parent relying on them, or to a project they know that only they can finish, they realize how much they're needed and how important their role is. Then, something shifts inside of them. It is this responsibility, this existential sense of indispensability, that becomes a source of strength and keeps them grounded. Even when things get very tough, it makes it hard for them to give up because there is now an animating telos, a real meaning to life that pushes them forward, no matter how many obstacles they face.

Overview

No one who exists is an exception; at certain times in our lives, we all face moments so dark they feel like they're going to swallow us whole: times when we're really confronted with the fragility of our own mortality, when despair starts to whisper in our ears. It's terrifying. But some people, against all odds, find a way through the darkness. *I'm one of such people.* And what I have learned is that life is not a mere product of chance or happenstance.

In the depths of my own personal abyss, in the several windows of events when the weight of despair threatened to crush me, I have always found something that gave me a reason to live. I believe that it was not chance or some lucky break that events conspired to prevent me from succumbing to the allure of death and ending my life. It felt like something more, something I couldn't quite understand: Providence.

Going through some really tough times, both physically and emotionally, taught me just how powerful our minds are. Our thoughts possess an unparalleled ability to shape our reality, to conjure circumstances that defy logic and reason. If we get to truly believe in something, without a single doubt, it's like the universe listens; things start to happen that wouldn't have otherwise. I saw this myself when I faced my own mortality in Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital back in 1999.

As I lay in the hospital ward, surrounded by others whose ailments seemed less or more formidable, I saw life and death up close. I saw and endured extreme pain; someone was always going to cry throughout the night because of the pain. I witnessed the final breaths of those who had fought valiantly but ultimately succumbed to their afflictions. Death was ever around the corner; we could see how fragile life was. It wasn't a question of if; it was always a matter of when. The ward was orthopedic, and so they brought in people who had been in terrible automobile accidents. You just knew someone was gone when you heard one or more people scream. Those screams haunted my sleep. And yet, I was still there, knowing deep down that I was meant to survive even when all others doubted it. That belief held on to me; it wouldn't let go.

I refused to accept that my journey was ordinary; it had to take something extraordinary for anybody to endure the depths of suffering I had experienced. That feeling pushed me, shaped every decision that I made, the friends that I connected with, and the questions that I dared to ask. It was a part of me, deep in the recesses of my mind, to try and understand the “why” of my existence. So, this idea became like my own child, an ethereal creation that I felt completely responsible for.

What I've learned from everything I've been through is that purpose isn't just some passing thought or some distant mirage. It's essential; it's what keeps us going, giving us hope and meaning when life feels chaotic. What we believe and how strongly we believe it can actually change the way we experience the world.

So, if you're reading this, I encourage you to look deep inside yourself. Believe that you are here for a reason, that you have a place in this amazing thing we call life. Let that feeling sink in and guide your decisions, for this is ***THE LAST OF THE HUMAN FREEDOMS***: *to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*

6th Act

The Law of Positive Mindset and Affirmation

Quote

“I am the greatest, I said that even before I knew I was.” – Muhammad Ali

Narrative of Admonition

Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1899, into a middle-class family. From childhood, he had a sharp mind and a real gift for storytelling. But, behind this charismatic and adventurous exterior, he was extremely and unfortunately pessimistic, and it would come to define his life in significant ways.

As Hemingway started his writing career, this underlying pessimism manifested every time through self-doubt and would even pop up as perfectionism. He unrealistically held himself to an almost impossible standard, and he would constantly and harshly judge his own efforts. Although he initially found considerable success as a writer and earned some of the highest honors in literature, like the Pulitzer and the Nobel Prize, not even these accolades could shake off this negativity. He just wouldn't stop feeling perpetually unfulfilled.

This dangerous conditioning of the mind so much affected Hemingway's relationships, especially his marriages. He married four times in his life, and each time, it was a wreck of discord. Pleasing him was out of the question; you had to be spotless to survive with him. He picked out the negative in everything anyone did, no matter how good or how hard you tried. It was as though he was genetically wired for constant self-doubt and inner turmoil, which created a very toxic atmosphere. His wives and friends were emotionally exhausted, and people ended up walking away. He just couldn't seem to find the good in anything. Everything he touched died.

Now, beyond his personal relationships, this pessimistic outlook colored his entire view of the world. He seemed drawn to the darker sides of life, and his writing often wrestled with themes of war, death, and human suffering. It's easy to come up with the excuse that because he was so focused on these darker themes in his writings, it's what made it hard for him to really appreciate joyful moments and the beautiful happiness that life can offer. In reality, the opposite was the case.

Restless and disillusioned, he was always searching for something, some kind of validation or deeper meaning, and he often looked for it in unconventional and even sometimes risky ways, like big-game hunting, bullfighting, and at one point, even inserting himself into war zones as a journalist.

As time went on, it became more and more obvious that he was fighting some serious inner battles. His mental well-being began to deteriorate; he started struggling with periods of depression, feelings of despair, and a loss of purpose. But no one could get close enough to help him because he'd pushed everyone who cared away.

Thus, a consistently negative way of thinking can be powerfully damaging.

Authors View

In terms of our expectations, life is sandwiched between four layers: feeling hopeless, feeling down, feeling hopeful, and feeling fulfilled. All of these can easily be a matter of interpretation and perspective. Indeed, it really makes you think about the nature of our perceptions and the choices that shape our lives. It is very important to understand how dangerous a negative mindset can be;

Ernest Hemingway is sufficient proof of this. Negativity metastasizes; it wounds not just us, but everyone and everything around us. The world we experience is a reflection of who we are inside; our reality is conjured from the psychic projections of belief, dread, and aspiration. Unlike pessimism, which myopically fixates upon decay and ruin, optimism defies resignation; it looks beyond the present and believes in a better future. Optimism is the ignition that gives us the power to keep going, to rise above challenges, and to create our own destiny.

The Power Within

We don't have to pretend that everything is perfect, as though filtered through a kaleidoscope of rose-tinted illusions. No, we only need to truly understand the incredible power we each have inside of us, a power that can shape our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions. It doesn't matter if everything is okay or not; we just have to make sure that we're in charge, that our choices and the lens through which we apprehend reality can actually change what happens to us and the world around us.

We are not talking about what others say or think about you, which are comparatively facile to withstand when set against the far weightier reckoning of what you yourself accept, say, think, and do. It takes real courage to honestly look at yourself deep down inside and challenge all those negative stories you tell yourself, those old beliefs that make you feel like you're not good enough or that you can't do anything. It takes real courage to face the walls you've built in your own mind: the fear of messing up, the nagging self-doubt, and all those “shoulds” you've internalized from society.

And when you start questioning those limits you've set for yourself, you suddenly realize just how much is actually possible. A generative, affirmative mindset liberates you from the inertia of victimhood, from the illusion that life is merely a sequence of events that are inflicted upon you. Instead, you can start to feel powerfully responsible for your own life. You can learn how to handle the ups and downs of life with emotional intelligence and resilience: you can acknowledge them, deal with them in a healthy and constructive way, and then move on. As you grow in control, there'll be this general sense of calm and balance inside, regardless of prevailing circumstances.

Illustrative Anecdote

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, born in 1869 in Porbandar, Gujarat, India, had a strength of character that eventually led him to become such an important figure in history. You could have asked anyone at that time, and they would have told you, “Gandhi! He'll find a way.”

The world will test everyone eventually. Gandhi first discovered the benefits of thinking positively when he was living in South Africa. He experienced serious racial discrimination and injustice there, but instead of letting anger and resentment overcome him, he decided to meet these challenges with understanding. This was a very uncommon thing to do. He even began to use affirmations to keep his emotions under control and strengthen his positive outlook. Every day, he would use these affirmations to remind himself of what he was there to do, how dedicated he was to justice, and his belief in the power of nonviolent resistance. He called this philosophy of

nonviolence “Satyagraha.” He didn't just see it as a political tactic; it was a way he lived his whole life.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, his positive way of thinking and the practice of using affirmations became indispensable cornerstones of his statesmanship in the epochal struggle for independence. He believed that people could overcome their fear and self-doubt if they believed in their own worth and their capacity to change the world. Millions of Indians were motivated and inspired by him to struggle for their independence. Because of this, he had to cope with even more difficulties in India than he did in South Africa, including being imprisoned, coping with violence, and the sheer magnitude of the task at hand. However, he stuck to his principles and saw every challenge as an opportunity to improve.

Authors View

Your peace of mind is not a result of good or bad conditions; it's a choice, a process, and a learned predisposition. You can learn to walk through hell and the dark victorious against fear and doubt.

A trick to make the most out of life

Do not dwell too long upon a bad situation. Take a moment in the middle of all the pain and disappointment and ask yourself: What is the one positive out of all these negatives? Find it and build on it. Do this often, and it will become a habit. Soon, people will wonder about your uncanny ability to turn bad situations into good.

When you find yourself in life's storm, think of yourself as a sea captain mastering the art of sailing in the storm. When you find yourself in life's fire, think of yourself as raw gold in the process of refinement. Always look for the one positive, and you'll be surprised at what you are capable of surviving.

Learning the Habit of Being Positive

Attitude is a learned predisposition. A positive mindset is just this: an attitude, and you can absolutely learn it. The world is the sea, and you are the captain. Sometimes there is calm and everything seems to click effortlessly; other times, you must navigate a wild, raging storm as the wind roars and the waves crash. This is the way of the world, and you have to understand that everything that has a beginning also has an end. We cannot only survive the good, the bad, and the ugly; we can flourish.

To elect positivity is not a singular act, and then it's done. It's a journey, a constant unfolding of who you are and who you're becoming, of creating new ways of thinking and living, of pushing past limits, dealing with both the external and internal worlds, and not letting either sabotage the life that you're capable of living. This is your life; transient, ephemeral, a brief aperture in the vast continuum of time. And I tell you, on the day that you cease to exist, nothing tangible will matter anymore. The problems won't matter; the good life won't matter; only what the world became

because of you. So, you have to live this life, and you have to live it fearlessly, because everything eventually comes to an end: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Breaking the Grip of Regret

Regret is a dangerous addiction; it clouds the mind and shuts all doors leading to the future. Once you've been soaked in it, nothing is as present as yesterday. Don't let your life be decided by the mistakes of yesterday.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that a positive mindset is only for people persecuted by the troubles of the world; it's also for those haunted by things they did or didn't do in the past. Let's be honest, most of us have something we'd give anything to go back and change. Of course, no one can actually turn back time. But what many have managed to do is build a new future so powerful and fulfilling that it makes the past fade into the background and lose its grip on them.

Regret can be all-consuming, like a dark cloud hanging over everything, keeping us stuck in the past instead of letting us live in the present. It can infiltrate our thoughts, veil perception, and distort vision until the horizon of possibilities and latent opportunities all but vanish. We usually feel regret because we find it difficult to forgive ourselves. We should not only reserve forgiveness for other people; we, too, deserve to be forgiven. As we strive to make positivity a habit, we also have to fight against allowing negativity to become a habit because it can be very destructive.

The difference is always our perception of things. There are times when I look at a situation and realize that no matter how I feel about it or how I wish things could have happened differently, the damage has been done, and it's irreversible. After feeling bad for a while, and sometimes for a longer while, I say to myself, "Well, get up, boy! Then I ask myself, what benefits or opportunities has this situation presented?" And many times, it has been beyond amazing what came from asking such a question. Some damages may be irreversible, but failure itself is never terminal. Instead of construing mistakes as cul-de-sacs of destiny, we can apprehend them as invaluable tutelages; essential steps on our journey to grow. If we can change how we think, we can learn so much from our errors and use them to propel ourselves forward and make real, positive changes. We have the capacity to rewrite any story.

The Science of Unleashing the Power of the Mind

Thoughts are not just random things that pop into our heads; they build the world we live in.

Affirmations are positive statements that we consciously repeat to ourselves to reinforce beliefs that are empowering and to redirect our focus towards desired outcomes.

Regarding positive thinking and affirmations, scientists and researchers in human psychology have been exploring the labyrinthine intricacies of the mind; every inquiry is attempting to understand just how much our thoughts and beliefs influence our overall well-being and the course of our lives. It's actually more in the field of Positive Psychology, where what makes us thrive as humans and the things that contribute to our happiness are studied.

Developing an affirmative mindset, according to these studies, yields a plethora of salutary benefits, like better mental and emotional well-being and improved physical health in terms of strengthening our immune systems, lowering our stress levels, and helping us come back strong from tough times. Beyond this, it can reshape neural circuits within the brain and rewire our thinking patterns.

You see, our subconscious mind stores all the beliefs and thought patterns we've picked up over the years. When we repeat affirmations that reflect what we want to achieve, we're essentially giving our minds a new set of instructions. This is called **“cognitive restructuring.”** These affirmations build up ripple effects and begin to influence new ways of seeing things, new ways of acting, and, of course, new results.

The Neuroplasticity of the Mind

One of the most fascinating things we've learned about positive thinking and affirmations is the idea called **“neuroplasticity.”** This denotes that the architecture and functional dynamics of the brain are not irrevocably fixed from childhood, contrary to antiquated assumptions. Instead, our brains are amazingly adaptable; they can actually change and rewire themselves based on what we experience, what we think, and how we feel.

If we consciously and actively work on developing a positive mindset and using affirmations, we will be harnessing this incredible neuroplasticity to build new connections in our brains, strengthen positive thought patterns, and weaken the negative ones. We can evolve!

The Law of Repetition

You know how some ideas just get stuck in your brain? It's like they find a cozy spot, set up camp, and refuse to leave.

Now, to the obvious question: Have you ever heard a song for the first time and just didn't like it at all? The music might have sounded harsh or just boring, and you just couldn't wrap your head around why anyone would like such a piece of crap. Yes! I bet you've had such an experience. But then, you keep hearing this particular song everywhere. It's on the radio all the time, you see it on TV, and even your friends are humming it. Slowly, without even realizing it, you start to tap your foot along. Then one day it happens: you catch yourself singing the words.

Have you ever heard a saying you never really agreed with, but now, after hearing it a million times, you're starting to think, “Hmm, maybe it has a point?” Or, what about all the slogans that have become a part of your everyday lexicon?

There's a law called **“The Law of Repetition”** that explains the scenarios above. It's been used in advertising forever, and it's kind of amazing and maybe a little scary how well it works. It's a pretty simple idea, really: if you keep putting something in front of people over and over again, they'll eventually start to accept it, no matter what it is. It is like a gentle nudge, as if our brains are wired to think, “Oh, I've heard that before, so it must be true... or at least worth considering.” This law is a very powerful tool, and like any powerful tool, it bears the dual capacity to be wielded for beneficent or pernicious ends.

The law in its entirety makes you wonder how many things you believe simply because you've been exposed to them repeatedly, and how you can use this same tool to change the things that you don't want in your life.

Our minds can learn and grow; they take in new ideas and eventually make them part of who we are. It is like a garden; it grows whatever is planted. All that humans have ever created, invented, or discovered, every amazing piece of technology, every beautiful work of art, every scientific discovery; they all started as just a simple thought in someone's head. The mind is where it all begins, where dreams are conceived and birthed. One can even argue that we don't exist in the world; it is the world that exists in us, because we are the ones who interpret the world.

Mind Over Matter

Let's look at another illustration of two individuals with the same situation but different attitudes. We'll call them John and Ben. Both were working for the same organization, lost their jobs on the very same day, and were suddenly staring down the barrel of unemployment. However, even though they shared the same awful experience, their paths diverged in completely different directions simply because of how they chose to think.

John was one of those people who just seemed to radiate an almost incandescent positivity, genuinely and naturally. I wouldn't really say naturally, though it does seem so; he worked very hard to keep his thoughts happy and optimistic. Despite the external turmoil, he refused to allow his circumstances to define his internal state. He even had a sonorous, effervescent laugh that was contagious, one that spread joy everywhere that he went. People were naturally drawn to him because being around him was comforting and inspiring: a warm, genuine kind of happiness that seemed to make other people's worries melt away. Even people he didn't know would wave to him from across the street. Indeed, there was just something about him, an aura of happiness that was magnetic. In professional settings, particularly during interviews, John's sanguine disposition and confidence really helped him. He had a way of putting people at ease. Beyond the merits of his résumé, employers loved the cheerful energy that he brought to the meeting. You could feel it; it was palpable. Consequently, John quickly secured a fantastic position.

Ben's situation was quite different. He was weighed down by negativity, and it showed; he wore his problems on his face like a mask of despair. Losing his job hit him hard, and instead of looking forward, he just got angrier and angrier, and it became a catalyst for a cascade of blame and resentment. He blamed everyone: his old bosses, the economy, even his family; he blamed everyone but himself. Every day, he just kept convincing himself he was a victim of circumstances. There was absolutely no room for taking responsibility for his life, and this negativity seeped into everything that he did and said.

Ben's internal conflict was reflected in his job interviews. He would enter with his shoulders hunched over, a pall of self-doubt looming over him. It was obvious that he didn't really believe in himself, much less sell himself to the interviewers, and he simply couldn't muster any real passion. Prospective employers were hesitant to offer him any position because they really couldn't find a reason to. Every rejection made things worse, and he fell farther into a pit of blame and self-pity.

This negativity permeated every aspect of his existence; it poisoned his relationships. In the end, he pushed away the people who cared most about him.

This is how much our mindset can affect our lives. Regardless of our external circumstances or biological predispositions, we all have the power to choose how we think.

Overview

Affirmation

Remember that song that first didn't appeal to you but eventually won you over? This is how affirmations work. Our minds absorb and make true the things that we tell ourselves. Affirmations link our thoughts to the reality we live in by aligning these thoughts with emotions and behaviors, so they are more than just wishful thinking. Although it occurs gradually, this transformation has great power.

As we grow more positive, let these affirmations sink deep into our hearts, let them fill our minds with absolute belief, and guide us forward on our personal journey.

Say these words:

- Out of this situation, only good will come.
- I have moved on from the past; it is no longer my concern.
- No, I will not allow myself to be dragged into this bitterness. I choose to be happy.
- My whole life is in front of me, I'm seizing my moment.
- The past is the past, today is a new day, I'm a new man.
- I've made a decision to be happy; nobody can make me sad; I will not allow that.
- I'm sufficient, I'm enough. I don't need anybody to validate me.
- I refuse to live my life impressing others.
- I'm clearing out every commotion in my life. I will not live my life like a court case.
- I will not beg for anybody's respect; I have enough respect for myself.
- I'm not a prisoner to grudge; there's no room in my heart for bitterness. I forgive everyone who has hurt me, and I set them free.
- I'm grateful for everything that I have, whether perfect or imperfect, good or bad, beautiful or ugly; they are a part of who I am. I will now work to make them better.
- I refuse to give others control over my life, because they can switch on and off my happiness anytime they want. So, I've taken responsibility for my own happiness. It is now my duty. I'm in control.
- I am resilient, and I have the power to overcome any challenge.
- I choose to focus on the positive aspects of my life, no matter the circumstances.
- I deserve to be happy, successful, and loved.
- I release all negativity and embrace the abundance of positivity around me.
- I trust in my ability to make wise decisions and navigate through life's uncertainties.
- I am grateful for every experience; they contribute to my growth and wisdom.
- I have the strength and courage to pursue my dreams and turn them into reality.

- I deserve everything good that occurs in my life.
- I let go of the past and embrace the present moment with open arms.
- I draw good things into my life and surround myself with encouraging and positive individuals.
- I am worthy, capable, and self-assured enough to succeed in achieving what I want.
- I choose to see setbacks as stepping stones to success.
- I am in control of my thoughts.
- I am resilient in the face of adversity, and I always find a way forward.
- I am constantly growing, evolving, and becoming the best version of myself.
- These circumstances are necessary for my growth; I accept the challenge.
- I accept nothing but the best version of myself, so I spend every day learning and growing.

7th Act

The Law of Mindfulness and Meditation

Quote

Consciousness is man's freedom, the gateway through which he can mold and shape his mind, heart, and body.

Authors View

There is a chaos that comes with modern life; sometimes, it is the never-ending stream of thoughts, worries, and distractions. The main idea behind mindfulness is about breaking free from this cycle.

Mindfulness comes from ancient times, especially in Eastern philosophies like Buddhism. It was seen as a powerful way to find freedom from suffering; a way to objectively see what we're experiencing; a way to bring our attention to the moment as it unfolds without judging it or clinging to it; and a way to discover the richness and depth hidden within each passing second.

Think about something like a sunset and how much beauty it creates in the sky. Usually, we would probably be lost in our own little worlds, maybe scrolling on our phones, and completely miss it. That is just an illustration, but we do, of course, have so many beautiful sunsets in our lives that we let slip by unnoticed because we are too consumed by thoughts, worries, and distractions. But if we can be mindful, we will discover that happiness is not about some far-off goal or something we achieve later; it is right here, right now, in the beauty and depth of each passing moment.

The Science of Mindfulness

Beyond ancient traditions and wisdom, modern science has also discovered that regular practice of mindfulness affects us not just temporarily, but structurally and functionally. It makes it easier for us to manage our emotions, focus our attention, and improve our overall mental well-being. For example, MRI scans have shown that the amygdala, which is like the brain's alarm system for fear, becomes less sensitive in people who practice mindfulness. When this happens, it leads to a greater reduction in stress and anxiety.

It is not just the fear center alone that can be affected; there is also a boost of activity in the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain is associated with higher-order cognitive functions like decision-making and problem-solving. Because of this increased activation, we are better able to focus, think clearly, and make wiser decisions. We can easily achieve a state of total equanimity, which is a very vital tool for creating a life free from internal chaos.

It turns out that mindfulness is good for our bodies too, not just our minds alone. Research has also shown that mindfulness-based interventions can actually lower blood pressure, give our immune system a boost, and even help manage chronic pain.

Integrating Mindfulness into Daily Life

While it is good to hear about how great mindfulness can be, bringing it into our busy lives may be the difficult part. We are all juggling so much: work, family, bills, and a constant influx of data and information to be deciphered, so much that it can be incredibly difficult to stay present. It definitely takes conscious effort and perseverance for us to be able to infuse mindfulness into our routines and reclaim our happiness.

But do we really have to block out huge chunks of time for formal meditation in order to bring mindfulness into our lives? No, I believe it has more to do with finding ways to be present in the

little things we already do. Whether it is sipping a cup of tea, walking in nature, or truly listening when someone is talking to us, it is possible to imbue awareness and mindfulness in all these everyday moments.

So, how can we begin doing this in reality? Making an effort to focus on our small experiences is a good place to start. For instance, something as trivial as sipping your tea, you can decide to pay close attention to the weight and feel of the cup in your palm, the way the aroma permeates the air, and the warmth of the cup against your lips. These things are small, mundane, everyday moments, but if we can start to truly immerse ourselves in them, we will start to notice the magic and beauty that we often miss.

But of course, as already suggested, it is not always going to be easy; we cannot always stop our minds from wandering. The chaos of everyday stresses will always be there, but the most important thing is to remember to be gentle and kind to yourself. These detours are natural and all part of the process. With time, you will begin to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, in all the little moments that make up your life. The practice of mindfulness can really open the door to a life filled with happiness and purpose.

The Power of Meditation

For those who do not already understand what meditation looks like, just try to imagine yourself standing on the shore of a serene lake with tall mountains around you like watchful guardians. The water is so still that its surface mirrors the sky, the peaks, and the trees all over; such a beauty to behold, and even more beautiful is the peaceful atmosphere. Finding that same stillness within oneself is possible through meditation, which is a place where one can go deeply and simply be.

When one thinks of meditation, the first picture that springs to mind is of a person sitting with two fingers pinched on each hand. There are so many different ways to meditate, each one a journey to finding yourself and a little bit of peace. Mindfulness meditation is probably the most popular technique, which is all about being right here, right now. You just focus on what is happening, what you are thinking, how you are feeling, even what your body is telling you, and you just notice it all without trying to change anything or decide if it is good or bad.

Then there is meditation that focuses on loving-kindness. Sending positive vibes to yourself, your loved ones, and even strangers is the intention of this exercise. It gives you a sense of community, as if we are all part of something greater.

There are other techniques or practices; you just have to find the one that resonates with you. Do not force it. Let yourself be drawn to whatever speaks to you, whatever feels like it fits. That is how you will really discover what meditation can do for you.

All those wonderful things we have talked about that mindfulness can do actually come from meditation. Think about it: when you meditate, your body just naturally relaxes. Your heart slows down, your blood pressure eases, and stress hormones start to calm down. And when you let go of all the tension and stress, you are giving your body a chance to heal itself and feel brand new again.

Meditation has also been found to improve sleep quality, make your immune system stronger, and just generally make you feel healthier and more well.

And then there are also benefits beyond what meditation does for you personally. It spills over into your relationships and even the world around you. When you get to know yourself better, you naturally become more understanding and compassionate toward other people; you even become a better listener. All these qualities can make your connections with others deeper and more meaningful. So, in a way, meditation can actually help us create a world that is a little kinder and more peaceful.

Illustrative Anecdote

Emperor Ashoka ascended the throne in 268 BCE and would later become known as Ashoka the Great. In his early years, he possessed unmatched military prowess, a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield.

Emperor Ashoka desired to expand his kingdom at all costs, so he waged war after war, brutally conquering and annexing territories. It is true that he was successful in growing his empire, but strangely, these victories left him feeling hollow. It did not really matter what he had achieved; there was a deep sense of unease, a lack of meaning. Something was missing, and he began to question why he did it all in the first place.

It was during one very brutal battle that Ashoka truly saw the horrors of war; not that he had not seen it before, but this time he really looked, and it opened his eyes. The carnage was overwhelming; the endless rows of fallen soldiers, the cries of the wounded, and the sheer, senseless waste of life. How can it matter who wins or loses? The sight shook him to his core and broke something inside him. He could not ignore the weight of what he had done any longer.

It was around this same time that he started exploring spiritualism, when he found himself drawn to the teachings of Buddhism and wanted nothing more than to discover himself deeply and find inner peace. So, he turned to mindfulness and meditation. A transformation started taking place; he started wanting himself more compassion, empathy, and non-violence in how he governed. The “Ashoka Edicts,” a set of decrees issued by Ashoka, encouraged social welfare, religious tolerance, moral and ethical principles, and respect for all living things. During this time, the Mauryan Empire experienced unheard-of levels of peace, wealth, and harmony.

Deepening the Meditation Experience

Meditation can be a powerful and beautiful journey; you can get to know yourself on a deeper level and explore the depths of your own mind. There are different techniques, minor and advanced, that can open us up to entirely new realms of awareness and new levels of understanding. Breathwork, for instance, is a wonderful example; people have said about this technique of meditation that the experience is like a key that unlocks the door to expanded states of consciousness. When they paid attention to the rhythm and flow of their breath, and even changed their breathing patterns, they got the feeling of a connection with a powerful life force right on the inside, as though something within

them, a sleeping energy, had been awakened, and that they could see with a wider perspective of themselves and the world around them.

Visualization is another wonderful tool we can use to create beautiful scenes within our own minds. We may picture ourselves in peaceful natural settings, for example, surrounded by incredible beauty and a sense of tranquility. When we use our imagination in this way, we can build personal safe havens inside ourselves, places beyond the reach of the world's many tribulations.

Then, if you are looking for a really deep dive into meditation, retreats can be a wonderful way to go. They offer a chance to completely immerse yourself in the practice. Often, these retreats involve spending quite a bit of time in quiet reflection, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. In that quiet, peaceful cocoon of stillness, we will know the hidden corners of our own minds.

Applying Mindfulness and Meditation for Happiness

The Garden Within

Every time we talk about the journey to happiness, there is a need to simplify the concept; it all begins with a simple act: loving and nurturing ourselves first, for it is from within that we give all else.

There is a garden filled with the sweet perfume of new blossoms and music from the gentle rustling of leaves. This garden is not a physical one; it is simply our inner peace and contentment. And like all gardens, it requires care, attention, and gentle mindfulness. To do this, every now and then, we need to step away from the world's noise; we need to let go when we should. Learning how to release attachments is essential on this path to happiness. Life is always changing, and holding tightly to expectations and outcomes only brings us pain and disappointment. It is a difficult thing to do, as we can find many logical arguments to defend attachments, but if we can accept this constant flow of change, our hearts will be opened to the beauty of every single moment we experience: every second, every minute, every hour, and every day, instead of waiting for all the stars to align. And if we can create gratitude like this, happiness should be our constant companion.

The Art of Mindful Connection

This level of mindfulness that we've been talking about is not only effective for having the best connections with the self; as social creatures, being able to connect effectively with others is essential to our happiness. For instance, imagine you are having a heart-to-heart talk with someone you love. While with them, you're not just hearing their words alone as they express their thoughts and feelings; you're actually with them, mindful in the moment and listening beyond the spoken words, giving them your undivided attention without judgment. In this shared space, something special often happens: your connection will deepen, and you will understand each other on a whole new level; you'll be more compassionate and attuned to what the other person is feeling and experiencing. This is called a mindful connection: being fully present with the people in our lives. It is a simple practice, but it's the bedrock of a strong and meaningful relationship. In today's busy world, this kind of genuine connection is rare and precious.

Overcoming Challenges and Adversities

“These mountains that you are carrying, you were only supposed to climb.” – Najwa Zebian.

I once took my daughter to Zalika Gardens for a chess tournament. It was her very first one, and she was only eight years old. As the games went on, I couldn't help but notice a ten-year-old girl named Ivie Urieto. Under pressure, win or lose, she had the calm of a genius. It was like she could be standing on the edge of a steep mountain, the wind howling around her, the path treacherous and uncertain, and she wouldn't be moved by fear or doubt.

Mindfulness can help us deal effectively with stress and anxiety. The more mindful we are, the more we can observe our thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them. Instead of just reacting to things, we can respond thoughtfully and approach difficult situations with a sense of calm and clarity. Then there's meditation, which takes this a step further, helping us blur out external cacophony and tap into a quiet place inside ourselves, a sense of peace that we can have access to even when life gets stormy. If you are looking for strength and resilience, it can be found in this deep inner stillness.

Meditation is not only about relaxation; it is also a space for working through problems and making decisions. It is a common practice for powerful people to always take some time off for quietness. During meditation, we connect with our intuition, that inner knowing. Many solutions surface from this place of calm clarity, often to our surprise. By quieting our mental chatter, we switch gears to a wellspring of creativity and fresh, innovative thinking.

Overview

*The morning comes like an orchestra - slow - magnificent - a gift - fresh and calm as a dove -
oh - birds in the garden - you can almost feel the music in Eden - and behold the beauty of the
sun - gold with goodness - fair and gentle - and all for free.*

And I wondered why the sun must set.

*But comes the noon, and the rhythm turns to chaos - men bump into men - the violence in the
music of horns and engines - as the sun turns monstrous - and cash is king*

Then I know why the sun must set

- poetry from the book of counted whispers by Ike Emeka Zion

Life as a grown-up is what it is: an exhausting loop of responsibilities and obligations. It is a grinding trap, trying to be okay, trying to meet up, consumed by work, bills, and endless to-do lists. A necessity, yes, but to what end if the price is purpose, if we become automatons running on autopilot and disconnected from our own essence?

Undeniably, there is a nagging sense that something is missing; otherwise, you would not be reading this book. We all want to escape from the rat race, an oasis from the monotony, a sanctuary where we can be the authors of our own time. The problem is that we usually don't know the right ways to go about this, and so when the stress takes its toll, we lash out; when emptiness engulfs our being, we pick up vices that promise to numb it but only hurt us in the end.

But there is a way out: mindfulness and meditation. It defies the limitations of human existence. We can live in a circumstance and refuse for that circumstance to live in us; we can unplug from the cacophony, silence the clamor, and experience a reality of our own design. Because we are not victims of circumstance, but masters of our own destinies.

Step-by-Step Guide to Mindfulness and Meditation

So, my fellow travelers, let us awaken to the symphony of existence. The time is now.

Creating a Sacred Space

Find a calm and quiet area where you can practice without interruptions.

Clear the area of clutter, then create a soothing atmosphere according to what your religious or personal beliefs permit.

Posture and Alignment

You may sit on a cushion, on the floor, or in a chair; whatever works best for you is okay. The important thing is to sit up straight but not stiffly.

You should relax your shoulders, imagine your spine lengthening, and then keep your head balanced freely on your neck.

Rest your hands comfortably on your thighs or in your lap; your palms may face up or down.

Mindful Awareness

For mindfulness awareness, the first step is simply to be present. You start by noticing what is happening in your body; maybe the feeling of your breath coming in and going out, or the sounds around you.

Different thoughts will come and go; that's okay. Just try to observe them without judgment. They are like clouds drifting across the sky.

Breath Awareness Meditation

Pay attention to your breath. It is a good anchor to keep you present.

You should consciously notice how your body feels as you breathe in and out. Again, it's perfectly normal for your mind to wander; when it does, just gently and kindly bring your focus back to your breath.

Body Scan Meditation

You should start your scan by noticing how your toes feel. From there, slowly move your attention upwards through your feet, ankles, calves, and so on, all the way up to the top of your head. You

should begin to feel any areas that are relaxed or tense and uncomfortable. As you notice these sensations, breathe into them gently, and feel them soften and release.

Loving-Kindness Meditation

True love and compassion start with ourselves; we can't love others effectively unless we first love ourselves. Make it a habit to repeat affirmations like "I am happy," "I am healthy," and "I live with ease."

Then be kind enough to extend these same good wishes to other people, including those you find difficult or challenging. This can create more harmony in how you feel, think of, and relate to others.

Walking Meditation

Find a peaceful place to walk alone. Somewhere like a garden or a quiet park. Start by standing still for a moment and communicating with your body. Then, begin walking slowly and deliberately.

Feel the ground upon which you are walking, the movement of your legs as you walk, and the rhythm of your breath.

Integration into Daily Life

We've already emphasized the need to bring mindfulness into our daily lives, not just during our formal practices alone.

You would be surprised what magic lies in little things, like eating, brushing your teeth, or even washing dishes.

Be present in every moment as much as you can, savor the experiences, and notice the details.

Consistency and Persistence

To make this a habit, try to set aside some time every day for your mindfulness and meditation practice, even if it is just 5 or 10 minutes for a start. As you get more comfortable with it, you can gradually make your sessions longer.

Just remember that real change takes time, so be patient and kind to yourself.

Seek Guidance and Support

If you need extra support, you should consider joining a meditation group, going on a retreat, or finding a teacher who can guide you. There are also lots of resources that can help, like books, podcasts, and meditation apps.

If you follow these steps and make these techniques a regular part of your daily life, you should start to feel more present, peaceful, and aware of yourself and the world around you.

8th Act

The Law of Residual Happiness

(the auto-pilot and auto-play happiness)

Quote

The power to recreate oneself lies not in the circumstances we face but in the choices that we make despite them.

You are not defined by the circumstances that surround you; you are defined by the choices you make in the face of those circumstances.

Your happiness is not predetermined. It is a canvas that is waiting for your creative brushstrokes.

The Wiring of Happiness

The wiring of happiness or unhappiness is a complex cartography that defines how we perceive and experience the world, both internally and externally. Different people react to the ups and downs of life in different ways. Some people seem to have an innate proclivity for happiness, a kind of propensity that always draws them back to a state of inner serenity, no matter how difficult circumstances get; just give them a little while, and they will be back to their usual or normal baseline. But for others, they seem to be endlessly caught in a tangled web, consistently drifting toward sadness and a never-ending drama. It is as if happiness is temporary for them; even when good things happen, these kinds don't know how to live without chaos. I've met people like this before. I couldn't help but ask one of them, "Don't you ever get tired of all these problems? Do you really have to be involved in some kind of drama all the time, year after year?" It probably sounds like a harsh question to ask, but when you constantly get dragged into someone else's self-orchestrated chaos, believe me, you will start to wonder. This is the neural circuitry, sandwiched between nature and nurture, genetics and experience.

People have asked me sometimes in the past, "How did you get through all that and still stay so positive?"

Maybe it's just how I'm wired, or how I was raised, or even my genes, or maybe it's the circumstances themselves that I've been through, or a choice I made somewhere along the way. The most important thing is that if there's something we don't like about ourselves, we can always grow and change. No matter what the factors are, happiness does come down to perception, how we interpret the world within and outside of ourselves, and this is according to an old saying: ***"If we change the rules on what controls us, we will change the rules on what we can control. Just how radical are we prepared to be?"***

Narrative of Admonition

Marilyn Monroe: behind the charming smile, the ethereal beauty, and the alluring image that was projected onto silver screens, there would certainly be a presupposition that it was a life of flawless dreams.

But, born Norma Jeane Mortenson, she was acquainted with very harsh realities. Her childhood was unstable due to fractured relationships and difficult experiences, and she was moved from one foster home to another. She never really had a secure family to rely on; I believe she lived most of her childhood being a stranger, which developed into an insecurity and a perpetual longing for love and acceptance, a hole that never quite got filled.

As Monroe ascended to the pinnacle of fame, her luminous persona made her the object of everyone's longing and respect. The world looked at her and saw beauty, success, and magic; she was a dream to be dreamed. But that, of course, as already stated, was a presupposition, for away from the cameras and the bright lights, she was fighting a constant, private war against sadness; she was teetering on the precipice of despair.

Yes, she was loved by millions of people and had all the toys that came with being successful. None of that mattered; the melancholy was glued to her, the insecurities remained, the constant pressures to be perfect piled up, and the worst of them was the fear that everyone she loved would end up leaving her, just as it always had been right from her childhood.

It was this desperation of wanting to find love, to fill the emptiness inside her, to belong with someone, and to be truly happy that led her into many broken hearts. You see, every happy moment that Monroe ever experienced was ephemeral because it was followed every time by a return to her underlying baseline of sadness. There was an unseen force that was constantly dragging her back to a place of inexplicable unhappiness.

Authors View

So, what exactly is this unseen force that constantly pulls some people up to a place of peace or drags them down to a place of unhappiness? Happiness hovers around a relatively stable, long-term average called a “baseline” or “set point.” This baseline is not a rigid number; it is a range or tendency. Let's use the average temperature of a room as an example; it might fluctuate a bit or even more, but eventually it always comes back and stays within a certain range. This is sometimes also called Subjective Well-Being Settling.

The following theories could provide more insight:

Subjective Well-Being Settling

This is a ubiquitous human experience that we all inevitably share. Sometimes you feel on top of the world, with every facet of life aligning seamlessly. At other times, you may sense the Sisyphean burden of carrying the weight of the world upon your shoulders. Irrespective of circumstance, there is a sense of happiness and contentment, like a little inner compass that persists through both triumph and tribulation. You could win a big prize or achieve a long-held dream, or very tough things may happen, like losing someone dear to you or facing a major life challenge. In the end, our feelings tend to find their way back to a place that they are used to, a place they perceive as normal. It's not that we forget the good or the bad; it's just that our emotional state settles back into a familiar place. These subtle, hidden forces govern our affective life and orchestrate how we sustain balance amidst the flux of existence.

The Hedonic Treadmill

Basically, we are all running on a treadmill one way or another. Our ego wouldn't let us admit it, but a huge percentage of what we chase is the human version of a rodent treadmill: pleasure or escape just out of reach in the cage of existence. It's not that we don't ever achieve what we set out for, but that desire is insatiable.

The Hedonic Treadmill suggests that no matter what amazing things happen to us, or even when things go terribly wrong, we tend to drift back to our own personal baseline level of happiness. It's something to wonder about, isn't it? If just getting more stuff or having exciting experiences isn't the key to lasting happiness, then what is?

Happiness is never external; neither is it a destination. Perhaps if we understand that all thrills and pains fade (new purchases, new romantic feelings, new big achievements, or even new difficulties), we will be more careful about what we allow to steal our peace away. This doesn't mean that we should not strive for better things, but we should know that in the end, every tangible thing comes to an end. If we can understand and accept this fleeting nature of existence, lack and abundance will start having very little sway over us; we can then transcend the limitations of the treadmill and forge genuine and enduring happiness.

Adaptation Level Theory

Our perception of happiness is convolutedly intertwined with our experiences and whatever lens through which we view the world. We are constantly comparing our current situations to what we've experienced before; we use it as a yardstick to measure where we are, and to even judge the future. It's a host of experiences, good and bad, that we continuously import from the past. This comparison affects how happy we feel. This is our internal gauge; it is the yardstick through which we measure life, and our past experiences are what set the markings on it. As we are trying to adapt to new circumstances, our initial satisfaction wanes, and we recalibrate our expectations. So, even when things are good, if they are not better than what we are used to, we might not feel as happy as we expect. And then there is the law of familiarity at play; we get used to new things, even good things, and then they don't give us the same boost they once did.

Set Point Theory

How much of who we are emotionally do you think is already genetically predetermined? Very deep within every individual, there is a unique personal shade that colors everything that we experience. We sometimes call this idea the “Set Point Theory”; it is a nestled emotional home base that we are born with, a level of happiness we biologically tend towards that influences how our feelings rise and fall.

I shouldn't have to mention that life throws all sorts of things our way: joyful highs and crushing lows. These definitely affect our moods for as long as they last. But after the dust settles, a natural pull to our biological baseline sets in. This doesn't mean that we are helpless about who we naturally are; no, on the contrary, we are the architects of our souls, and we can design and redesign. It's very important, though, to acknowledge and understand who you are, truthfully and without prejudice or denial. When you know the facts about a problem, then you can know how much of it can be shaped or changed.

Peak-End Theory

If you can take a mental walk in the puzzle of all your memories, you will notice that some moments are almost evergreen. Much more than others, they stick with you and then shape your perception of what being happy means.

This brings us to the idea called the Peak-End Theory. High points and their ends are very important for how we look back on an experience. Beyond how long something lasted or how intense it was

overall, we usually pick out certain moments to immortalize: the most exciting or emotional parts, and most especially, how it all wrapped up.

It's mostly the reason adulthood often steals certain magic from childhood and adolescence. When you begin your adult life, you do so with no experiential compass. Nobody told you what works and what doesn't, and even if they did, how many of us actually listened? Why should we, except perhaps in an act of unexamined faith? There's a popular saying where I come from that assert, "What an adult sees sitting down, a child won't, even if they climbed an Iroko tree." So, the adults are less reckless because they have had a personal encounter with how exhilarating experiences can end badly. And while this can save from trouble, it is also a limitation in its own way, because the people who alter the trajectory of the world are not only audacious enough to imagine that they could, but are frequently those unburdened by the indoctrination that it could not be done.

Let's try another illustration to better understand this. Ask someone who's had their heart broken. Of all they will tell you, two things will likely dominate their memories: the breathtaking moments and how it all fell apart. This is a very powerful phenomenon; there is always the possibility that we will remember the peak of the circumstances that left a mark, and we will also remember their end. This is a benchmark that can be surprisingly difficult to change, even when new opportunities for joy arise.

Transcending Limitations

The most extraordinary transformations come from the power of personal reinvention: the courage to reimagine ourselves, to defy expectations.

To be honest, our subjective experiences are a labyrinth, but regardless of whatever our predetermined baselines are, we do have the capacity for change; we will always have this capacity. And if we arm it with self-awareness, resilience, and conscious efforts, we can reshape our happiness however we see fit. We can transcend the limitations of our innate predispositions.

1.0 Building a High Baseline of Happiness

In the depths of our being, there is a wellspring of possibilities we've yet to tap. Let us dive in, let us discover our true essence, and recreate ourselves anew.

Flourishing

This is a key step toward reinvention. Just like tending to a garden, you don't expect it to grow wild and then produce beautiful flowers and fruits. There has to be effort; you will need to nurture the soil, provide water and sunlight, and maybe even protect it from harsh weather conditions. Flourishing is tending to your own inner garden. We have to do this because we are not just passive recipients of life; we are active participants in its creation.

Talking about flourishing, we are talking about more than momentary good feelings. There has to be a sense of purpose; we should find meaning in whatever it is that we do, in our work, in our

relationships, in our everyday living. We should keep growing and keep learning. ***We should own our lives and see life in whatever it is that we do.***

We have this obligation to actively work towards flourishing every day. We ought to exert our utmost effort to make choices congruent with our deepest values, take care of our physical and mental health, and seek out experiences that bring us joy and fulfillment.

1.1 Physical Well-being

Our physical health and our happiness are integrated very much. The way that our body feels, how much energy we have, and how well we take care of ourselves, all directly influence our emotions and how we think.

On a biological level, the human body loves to keep its system balanced; this is called “**homeostasis**,” the body's natural tendency to maintain balance and equilibrium. When our physical health is optimal, our bodies function harmoniously, and we just feel good. You've got energy, you feel alive, and you generally begin to function well across endeavors. Activities that promote physical well-being, like getting regular exercise, eating good food, and making sure that you get enough sleep, help your body to keep this balance, which in turn contributes immensely to a higher baseline of happiness.

Exercise

Regular physical exercise has actually been scientifically proven to release what is known as endorphins, neurotransmitters that are responsible for good feelings like happiness and well-being. So, when you engage in activities that get your heart going and make your muscles work, you are not only getting in better shape; you are telling your body to release these “feel-good” chemicals, which affect your emotional state positively. Exercise also sends more blood flow to the brain, which enhances cognitive function and reduces stress and anxiety.

Nutrition

We are interesting machines. The human system is like a vehicle; there is the body and all its parts, and there is the mind, the engine that controls the vehicle. To keep this human machine running smoothly, you need to give it the right kind of fuel. Eating a balanced diet, rich in nutrients, provides the necessary building blocks for optimal physical and mental function. Essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants support brain health, boost mood, and enhance cognitive performance. Eating right also helps keep your blood sugar steady, which means you're less likely to have crazy mood swings. So, generally, eating well creates physical and emotional stability, and stability in the long run improves our baseline of happiness.

Rest

The importance of restful sleep cannot be overstated. You know that there are times when you are just totally wiped out. Well, it is your body telling you that it needs sleep. During sleep, our bodies undergo vital processes of repair, rejuvenation, and memory consolidation, which are very important for both body and mind. You can call it a reset button for your physical and mental states.

Beyond the direct physiological effects, how you treat your body influences your self-perception and self-esteem. If you actually take the time to care for yourself, you are telling yourself, “Hey, I’m worth this.” It’s self-programming; you say it, believe it, act it, and birth it forth into reality. This is positive self-regard, it is self-acceptance, without which our baseline of happiness suffers.

1.2 Mental Resilience

Life is not always sunshine and rainbows; we all go through tough times. A high baseline of happiness requires the development of mental resilience. This is where concepts like mindfulness, self-reflection, and emotional intelligence come in. (These concepts have been discussed extensively in this book.) They may help you build up your inner strength, so when life throws you curveballs, you can handle them with a bit more calm and perseverance.

1.3 Meaningful Connections

Whether we acknowledge it or not, the people who surround us constitute external variables that can either breed chaos or support tranquility in our lives. While a healthy amount of independence is good, isolation is dangerous. We are all wired for connection as human beings; it is our essence, our primordial necessity: the shared experience, the longing to be seen, to be understood, and to belong. If that were to be taken away from us, what semblance of existence would remain? Look back to some of the most luminous fragments of your past; I daresay a substantial portion of them involved other people. We were never designed to exist as solitary islands.

When our connections fray, when they break, a fragment of our very being splinters as well. A marriage in crisis, for instance, is particularly a painful example. The constant friction and misunderstandings, to be at odds with the one person that you are supposed to be closest to, this can be like a slow, insidious poison. Then you compare it to the spark of the early days when you first met and were living peacefully, or compare it to when there is reconciliation after a horrible period of bitter crisis.

I know because I’ve been in the situation a couple of times. At one time, my wife and I went through a period where it felt like we were drifting apart, like we were on separate paths. I can tell you that the tension was palpable and unbearable.

2.0 Eudaimonic Well-being

When our lives are in line with our goals and values, it is easy to find true fulfillment.

Eudaimonic well-being is a concept that tries to explain the deeper aspects of what living a good life should mean. It is a psychological and philosophical approach to well-being that goes beyond only avoiding suffering or experiencing pleasure. Ancient Greek philosophy is where the term “eudaimonia” first appeared, especially in Aristotle’s “Nicomachean Ethics.” Eudaimonia, according to Aristotle, was about “flourishing” or “living well,” not merely enjoyment. According to him, it might be attained by leading a moral life, behaving in line with one’s greatest potential, and achieving one’s goals.

It's important to distinguish eudaimonic well-being from hedonic well-being. Hedonic well-being focuses on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, to emphasize positive emotions and immediate gratification. Eudaimonic well-being, on the other hand, emphasizes meaning, purpose, and personal growth, even if it requires obstacles or suffering.

You should know that if he believes that his life means something, then, even behind walls of steel and concrete, a man can always be free.

I do remember the sandcastles we built when we were kids; even when we knew they were going to be washed away by the next rain or wind, they still meant the world to us because we built them with intention, because it was wondrous to realize that with our own hands, we could summon creation into being. And because it wasn't just about ownership of the creation, we had a better understanding of the fleeting nature of life. It was all about the process, and so it shall eternally remain: about what and who we were, what and who we are, and what and who we are becoming.

And this brings us to the inevitable question: what does it truly mean to live a life of eudaimonia?

Purpose

This is a quest for that inner compass, that sense of direction that guides your actions towards the most important questions of life. What are you here to do? What mark do you wish to leave on the world?

Authenticity

To get rid of the masks we wear for others and to be true to ourselves. This is very uncomfortable and challenging, I tell you, but in the end, we will live in alignment with our values.

Personal Growth

We should remember that we are a work in progress, constantly evolving and expanding our horizons. Our perception of challenges must also constantly be worked on to see them as opportunities for growth.

Connections

We've already stated in previous pages the benefits of having genuine relationships with others, relationships that nourish our souls.

Acceptance Yourself

We should embrace our imperfections and recognize our inherent worth. Be compassionate and understanding to yourself.

Autonomy

We should own our lives; this should never be put on the table of negotiations. Be the master of your own destiny.

Environment

When you own your life, you gain the agency to navigate existence with all its ups and downs, adapt to change, and create a sense of order in your surroundings.

Remember, happiness is not a destination; it's a journey.

3.0 Subjective Well-being

When we talk about the factors that shape our experience of happiness, subjective well-being is at the very top of the list.

Previous illustrations have shown that two people can stand in the same rainstorm and walk away with completely different feelings. One might feel miserable, soaked, and defeated. On the other hand, the other person could feel a sense of cleansing. The rain is the same, but the subjective experience, their personal interpretation, is vastly different.

This interpretation is the result of a few key elements:

Perception

Are you a person of glass-half-full or glass-half-empty? Perception is how we see the world, how we filter, decode, and interpret information. It is the lens through which we view reality. Some people will see opportunities where others see obstacles. Some people, no matter what good surrounds them, will still focus on the negative, they will see only threats and problems.

Attitude

This is our overall outlook on life, our general disposition. A great attitude will lead to optimism; a poor attitude will lead to pessimism. A great attitude will approach challenges with a sense of curiosity; a poor attitude will do so with a sense of dread. A great attitude will create flourishing relationships; a poor attitude will push people away.

Internal Narratives

There is an ongoing dialogue in our heads about how we explain our experiences to ourselves. Some people will convince themselves into growth; others will tell themselves that they are victims and failures. Our internal narratives have a very powerful impact on our emotions and our behaviors.

It is not the events themselves that determine our happiness, but our subjective interpretation of the events.

Overview

Within the depths of our human experience, we do have the capacity to create for ourselves the kind of sustainable happiness that transcends fleeting moments. Happiness requires intentional work, but it doesn't have to be difficult; it can, in fact, be made effortless into an elevated level,

orchestrated to become automated, a natural part of who we are, our go-to way of responding to whatever life throws our way, benevolent or adverse.

Self-Mastery

Like a potter shapes his clay, like a child shapes his sandcastle, we are masters of our destinies. We are tasked with the conscious and deliberate effort to gain control over our own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors; to be the architects of our inner worlds, instead of being at the mercy of external circumstances or internal impulses.

If we stop being passengers in our own lives and take the wheel, we will achieve transcendence.

Ambition in Maturing

A happy life is not a gift; it is deliberate, it is intentional, it is ambitious in the spirit of continuous growth. You have to want it, to crave it, because the world and its wife will push you to the edge of storms, and you will have to make a choice, an ambitious choice, to want nothing but happiness.

It is this ambition that will spiral into personal growth and evolution. It will uproot many trees on the way, it will build many bridges, and in the end, you will understand that happiness is not a static destination; it is a continuous process of self-discovery and refinement. You will grow into the habitual state of blissful ease, and happiness will become your default mode of being. At this level of ambitious maturity, offenses will no longer disrupt your equilibrium as they did before because they will become unworthy of your precious attention and energy, and the grip of negativity will fade into insignificance.

The full book is available as a complete volume.

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